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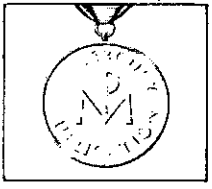

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Complete List of the 55 Prize-Winning Stories in EQMM's Eighth Annual Contest

HONOR ROLL OF THE DETECTIVE-CRIME SHORT STORY, 1953

FIRST PRIZE

My Brother Down There	by Steve Frazee

SECOND PRIZES

Miss Paisley's Cat	by Roy Vickers
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The Stroke of Thirteen	by Lillian de la Torre

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The Girl Who Married a Monster	by Anthony Boucher
Nothing So Hard As a Diamond	by Henry Myers
I'll Wake You Early	by Margaret Page Hood

SPECIAL AWARDS

Conversation at an Inn	by Phyllis Bentley
Ms. in a Safe	by Frank Swinnerton
The Bird House	by William March
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Heaven Can Wait	by C. B. Gilford
The Town Without a Straight Man	by Will Stanton
Father Was Always Right	by Hugh A. Mulligan
A Break in the Film	by John F. Suter
The Clue That Wasn't There	by L. A. G. Strong
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ADDED AWARDS: SHORT STORIES

All of God's Children Got Shoes	by Howard Schoenfeld
Pursued	by Fletcher Flora
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The Street of the Buzzards	by Dennis Wiegand
The Poison Typewriter	by William Abrahams
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Pass the Bottle	by Hayden Howard

ADDED AWARDS: SHORT-SHORT STORIES

Mrrrar!	by Edgar Pangborn
One for the Road	by Will C. Brown
All Day Sunday	by Ben Ray Redman
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A G Is a G	by David Vincent Sheehan

SPECIAL POSTHUMOUS AWARD

The Return of Prince Zaleski	by M. P. Shiel

SPECIAL AWARDS FOR "FIRST STORIES"

BEST OF THE YEAR

The Silver Spurs	by E. C. Witham

RUNNERS-UP

Murder at Chanticleer Hall	by Ralph Jones
The Ghost of Greenwich Village	by Donald McNutt Douglass
The Man Who Could Not Die	by Raphael Hayes
Cinder City Blues	by E. H. Reynier
Doublecross	by Aljean Meltsir
The McGregor Affair	by Sidney Rowland
Roll Call	by Eleanor St. Germain
Hard Bargain	by Richard West
Try to Remember	by Lillian King
Helpless Victim	by C. G. Lumbard
The Pearly Gates Are Open	by Gladys Cluff
President Sam Houston: Detective	by James C. Brough

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The First Prize winner this year — Steve Frazee's "My Brother Down There" — is the story of a manhunt, the story of a posse tracking down four escaped convicts. The chase takes the reader over ridges and slide-rock trails out in the far West, through canyons and forests and over snow-capped mountains. You will be outdoors for the next half-hour or so, outdoors in every kind of weather, and you will learn what it means to be the hunter, and what it means to be the hunted . . .

Now, what manner of man wrote this year's First Prize story? Well, let us tell you, quoting directly from his own letter to us. He's an outdoors man — that will be evident to you by the time you have finished a single page of his story. He is a native Coloradoan, born in 1909. In the early part of The Great Depression, he worked on newspapers and spent his spare time writing pulp stories. Both these vocations were confining to a man like Steve Frazee, so as often as he could he got out of the straitjacket of four-walls-and-a-typewriter. And eventually he broke off completely from day-long stints indoors and went back to mining, construction work, and various other outdoor occupations.

After the War-to-End-All-Wars, Steve Frazee began to write again — Western stories, adventure yarns, sea tales, and, yes, an occasional story about crime and detection. But things were not easy for the outdoors man who could not stand confinement: it is a matter of record that, as Mr. Frazee puts it, "some sales were not instantaneous."

But Mr. Frazee persisted — which may prove that, outdoors man or not, he is a born writer, and cannot escape the call of writing any more than he can escape the call of the wild . . . Now he writes about 3000 words in half a day's work at his desk — and then hightails it outdoors, to build something or to go fishing. Sure, when his literary agent (a New Yorker, it should be explained) prods him to stick to his desk, Steve Frazee tries — but then he remembers an old friend of his, also a writer, who sold 12,000,000 words, and then got nervous.

Mr. Frazee has a horror of getting nervous . . .

Now, join the author in his story of a manhunt, in his story of the age-old struggle between Society (with a capital S) and its outlaw members. Come with the posse in its deadly pursuit — through golden fields and green meadows, past lakes and swamps and beaver ponds, into the wide open spaces. Yes, this is a story of the outdoors, but it is also a story of men — and especially of man (without the capital letter) . . .

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MY BROTHER DOWN THERE

by STEVE FRAZEE

NOW THERE WERE THREE LEFT. Here was the fourth, doubled up on his side at the edge of the meadow grass where the wind had scattered pine needles. His face was pinched and gray. Big black wood ants were backing away from the blood settling into the warm soil.

Jaynes turned the dead man over with his foot. "Which one is this?"

Holesworth, deputy warden of the State Penitentiary, gave Jaynes an odd look.

"Joseph Otto Weyerhauser," he said. "Lifer for murder."

Deputy Sheriff Bill Melvin was standing apart from the rest of the posse. He had been too deep in the timber to take part in the shooting. He watched the little green State patrol plane circling overhead. It was a windless day. The voice of the mountains spoke of peace and summer.

Joseph Otto Weyerhauser. Spoken that way, the words gave dignity to the fugitive who lay now on the earth in the pale green uniform that had been stolen from the wash lines of a little filling station a hundred miles away.

Sid Jaynes was a beefy man with dark eyes that glittered. Jaynes had not known who the convict was and he had not cared. The green pants and shirt, when Weyerhauser tried to run across the head of the little meadow, had been enough for him.

"He played it like a fool," Jaynes said. "He could have stayed in the timber."

"You made $12.50 with each one of those shots, Jaynes." The deputy warden's voice ran slowly and deliberately.

"Let the State keep their twenty-five bucks," Jaynes said. "I didn't come along for that." His rifle was a beautiful instrument with a telescopic sight. The dead man lay beside a sawed-off shotgun and a .38 pistol taken from a guard he had slugged with a bar of soap in a sock. "Why didn't he stay in the timber, the damn fool?"

"They're all city boys," Warden Holesworth said. "He was heading for the highway."

It put you on the wrong side of your job to make a comparison between the dead man's short-range weapons and the rifles of the posse, Deputy Bill Melvin thought. Weyerhauser had been one of four prison escapees. He had taken his big chance with the others, and here the chance had ended.

That was all there was to it; but Melvin wished he did not have to look at Weyerhauser or hear any more from Jaynes, who was always the first man to reach the sheriff's office when the word went out that a manhunt was on. Jaynes, who ran a

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garage, never came when help was needed to find a lost hunter or a wrecked plane.

Sheriff Rudd spoke. Sheriff Rudd was a veteran of the open-range days of men and cattle. He stood like a rifle barrel, tall and spare. His face was bony, with a jutting nose.

"There's three more," the sheriff said. "All tougher than Weyerhauser." He squinted at the green plane, now circling lower in the trough of the mountains. "Call that flyer, Melvin. He's buzzing around this basin like a bee in a washtub. Tell him to get up in the air. Tell him about this and have him call the patrol station over the hill and see if anything has popped there."

Deputy Melvin started back to the horse with the radio gear. Jaynes called, "Ask him if he's spotted any of the other three."

Melvin paid no attention.

"One twenty, ground party, Stony Park."

"Ground party, go ahead."

"Get some altitude. You're making Sheriff Rudd nervous."

"What does Rudd think I am? There's a hell of a wind up here. What happened?"

"We got Weyerhauser. Dead. Call Scott and Studebaker on the road blocks."

"Stand by," the pilot said.

Melvin leaned against the mare. She moved a little, cropping grass, switching her tail at deer flies unconcernedly, while Melvin listened to the plane call across the mountains. Jaynes's sleeping bag was on the crosspieces of the pack saddle, put there to protect the radio from branches.

Jaynes walked over. "Has he spotted —?"

"I didn't ask," said Melvin.

"Why not?"

"He would have said so if he had."

"Well, it won't hurt to ask. Maybe —"

"Go collect your twenty-five bucks, Jaynes."

"What do you mean by that?"

Jaynes did not understand. He never would.

"Ground party, One twenty," the pilot said. "Negative on all road blocks and patrol cars."

"Thanks, One twenty. Call Studebaker again and have an ambulance meet us at the big spring, east side of Herald Pass, at one this afternoon."

"Okay." The plane began to climb. Melvin watched until it gained altitude and shot away across the timbered hump of Herald Pass.

"That's a hell of a note," Jaynes complained. "Guys like me come out here, taking time off from our business just to do what's right, and you don't even ask whether he's spotted the others or not."

Melvin pulled the canvas cover back over the radio. "Four times twenty-five makes a hundred, Jaynes. What are you going to buy with all that money?"

"I give it to the Red Cross, don't I!"

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"You mean that first twenty-five you knocked down — that little forger? I remember him, Jaynes. He came out of a railroad culvert trying to get his hands up, scared to death, and you cut loose."

Jaynes was puzzled, not angry. He said, "You talk funny for a deputy sheriff, Melvin. You sound like you thought there was something nice about these stinking cons. What are we supposed to do with them?"

Melvin went back to the posse. Deputy Warden Holesworth had searched the dead man. On the ground was a pile. Candy bars, smeary and flattish from being carried in pockets; seven packs of cigarettes.

"One down and three to go," Jaynes said. "Where do we head now, Sheriff?"

Sheriff Rudd looked around the group. Two or three of the men sitting in the grass had already lost stomach. Rudd named them and said, "Take that sorrel that's started to limp and pack Weyerhauser up to the highway."

"At the big spring on the east side," Melvin said. "There'll be an ambulance there at 1 o'clock."

"I've got to get back myself," the deputy warden said. "Tomorrow I'll send a couple of guards out. We can fly in Blayden's hounds from up north —"

"I don't favor hounds," the sheriff said. "Keep your guards, too, Holesworth. The last time you sent guards we had to carry 'em out. You keep 'em sitting in those towers too much."

"That's what they get paid for, not for being Indian guides and cross-country men. To hell with you." They grinned at each other. Then Holesworth gave Jaynes another speculative glance and helped lift Weyerhauser on to the lame horse.

That left seven in the posse. They divided the cigarettes. Small ants went flying when someone gave the pile of candy bars a kick. One chocolate bar, undisturbed by the boot, was melting into the earth beside the other stain.

Two days later Sheriff Rudd cut the trail of three men whose heelprints showed *P* marks in the center. Rudd swung down and studied the tracks, and then he took the saddle off his gelding.

"What's the stall?" Jaynes asked. "That's the track of our meat, Rudd."

"A day and a half old, at least. Give your horse a rest." The sheriff sat down on a log and began to fill his pipe.

Melvin walked beside the footprints for several steps. He saw the wrapper of a candy bar lying on the ground. Four days on candy and desperation. The poor devils. Poor devils, hell; the candy had been stolen from the filling station where they had slugged a 60-year-old man, the desperation was their own, and they were asking for the same as Weyerhauser.

Melvin looked up at the gray

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caps of the mountains. They ran here in a semicircle, with only one trail over them, and that almost unknown. If these tracks with the deep-cut marks in the heels continued up, the fugitives would be forced to the forgotten road that led to Clover Basin. From there the trail went over the spine at 13,000 feet.

It was a terrible climb for men living on candy bars. Melvin went back to the resting posse, saying nothing.

"Clover Basin, maybe?" Sheriff Rudd asked.

Melvin nodded.

"Why haven't the damn search planes seen them?" Jaynes asked.

"There's trees and rocks, and the sound of a plane engine carries a long way ahead." Bud Pryor was a part-time deputy, here now because he had been called to go. He was a barrel-chested man who could stop a barroom fight by cracking heads together, but he didn't care much for riding the mountains. And he didn't care at all for Jaynes.

"Any other stupid questions, sharpshooter?" Bud Pryor asked Jaynes.

The sheriff got up. "Let's go."

They rode into the first of the great fields of golden galliardia at the lower end of Clover Basin. The buildings of the Uncle Sam Mine hung over the slope at the upper end like gray ghosts. Rudd stopped his horse. The others crowded up behind him.

Motion started at the highest building and sent small points out on the slide-rock trail. "Hey!" Jaynes cried. Both he and Melvin put glasses on the tiny figures scrambling over the flat gray stones. Two men in green uniforms. Two men who ran and fell and crawled upward toward the harsh rise of Clover Mountain.

Jaynes let his binoculars fall on the cord around his neck. He raised his rifle, sighting through the 'scope. Some sort of dedication lay in his glittering eyes, some drive that made Melvin look away from him and glance at the sheriff.

Rudd, however, without the aid of glasses, was watching the fleeing men on the eternal stones of Clover Mountain.

Jaynes kicked his horse ahead. "Come on!"

"Get off and lead that horse a while, Jaynes," the sheriff said. "You've knocked the guts out of him already the last few days."

"There they are!" Jaynes gestured with his rifle.

"And there they go." Rudd got down and began to lead his horse.

"Now what the hell!" Jaynes twisted his face. "They're getting away — farther out of range every second!"

"They're a mile airline. It'll take us the best part of two hours to reach the mine," Sheriff Rudd said with weary patience. "And then it will be dark. Go on, Jaynes, if you want to, but leave that horse behind."

"It's mine."

"You'll leave it behind, I said."

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Jaynes looked through his 'scope and cursed.

"Three came in here," Bud Pryor said. "Go on up and kick that third one out, Jaynes. He's there."

"How do you know?" Jaynes's voice was not large.

Pryor's thick lips spread in a grin. He was still sweating from the last steep hill where they had led the horses. "Gets chilly mighty quick in these high places, don't it?"

Rudd started on, leading his horse. It was dusk when they closed in on the bunkhouse of the Uncle Sam Mine, working around from the rocks and coming closer in short rushes to the toe of the dump. Jaynes and Melvin went up the dump together until their heads were nearly level with the rusted rails that still held rotting chocks.

"I'll cover you from here," Jaynes said. "This 'scope gathers light so a man can't miss."

Melvin raised his head above the dump. An evening wind drove grouse feathers across the yellow waste toward him. He saw a rat scurry along the ledge of a broken window and then sit still, looking out. Inside, two or three others squealed as they raced across the floor.

Melvin scrabbled on up and walked into the bunkhouse. Two rats carrying grouse bones ducked through holes in the floor. One half of the roof was caved in but the other end, where the stove sat with its pipe reduced to lacy fragility, was still a shelter.

The stove was warm.

Here, for a time, three men had stayed. They were city-bred, and so this man-made shell seemed the natural place to take shelter. No outdoorsman would have sought the rat-fouled place, but the escaped prisoners must have received some small comfort from it.

Instinctively they had huddled inside this pitiful ruin for the security that all pursued mankind must seek. And now, caught by the dusk and the silence, looking through a window at the mighty sweep of the high world, Bill Melvin was stirred by a feeling for the fugitives that sprang from depths far below the surface things called logic and understanding.

"What's in there?" Jaynes called.

Melvin stepped outside. "Nothing."

Jaynes cursed. He climbed to the dump level and stared at the dim slide-rock trail. He fondled his rifle.

Pryor's voice came from the lower buildings, high-pitched and clear, running out to the walls of the great basin and echoing back with ghostly mockery. "Nothing in any of these, Sheriff!"

"Let's get on the trail!" Jaynes yelled.

"Come down here," Sheriff Rudd said, and both their voices ran together on the darkening rocks around them.

Melvin and Jaynes rejoined the others. Melvin was dead-weary now, but Jaynes kept looking at the slide-rock, fretting.

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"We can't get horses over that slide-rock at night," Rudd said. "And maybe not in daylight. We'll camp here tonight."

"And all that time they'll be moving," Jaynes objected. "Are you sure you want to catch them, Sheriff?"

"They'll be feeling their way down the worst switchbacks in these hills," Rudd said. "On empty stomachs."

"Like hell!" Jaynes said. "They've been living like kings on grouse."

"One grouse," Melvin said.

"They must be getting fat." Rudd pointed to the floor of the basin. "We'll camp down there and give the horses a chance to graze."

"And make this climb again in the morning," Jaynes said disgustedly.

Dew was gathering on the grass when they picketed the horses. All the chill of the high-country night seemed to have gathered in the enormous black hole. They ate almost the last of their food at a fire built from scrubby trees.

Jaynes cleaned his rifle before he ate. He rubbed the stock and admired the weapon, standing with the firelight glittering in his eyes.

"What will that pretty thing do that a good Krag won't?" Bud Pryor asked.

Jaynes smiled and let the answer gleam in the reflection of the flames.

"Somebody will have to start out tomorrow for grub," the sheriff said. "How about it, Jaynes?"

"I can live on the country," Jaynes said.

"Yeah." The sheriff unrolled his sleeping bag. "One hour each on guard tonight. Not at the fire, either. Stay out by the horses. I'll take it from 3 till dawn."

Jaynes peered into the darkness. "You think the third one is around in the rocks, huh?"

"I think the horses can get all tangled up. The third man went over the hill a long time ago," Rudd said.

"How do you know that?" Jaynes asked.

"Because I'm betting it was Marty Kaygo. He's the toughest and the smartest. He wouldn't sit in that eagle's nest up there, hoping nobody comes after him."

"Kaygo, huh? What was he in for?" Jaynes stared toward the gloomy crest of the mountain.

"He killed two cops." Rudd took off his boots, pulled his hat down tightly, and got into his sleeping bag. "He killed them with one shot each." The sheriff was asleep a few moments later.

Jaynes set his rifle on his sleeping bag and began to eat. "Who are the other two?"

"Don't you even know their names?" Melvin asked.

"What's the difference if I don't?"

Maybe Jaynes was right. It had to be done, one way or another; names merely made it harder. "Sam Castagna and Ora L. Strothers," Melvin said. "Castagna used to blow up rival gamblers for a syndicate. Strothers specialized in holding up banks."

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"Ora L. That's nice and gentle, a con having a name like that," Jaynes said.

"Don't you give him the right to have a name?" Melvin asked. "Don't you give him the right to be a human being?"

Jaynes looked blank at the anger in Melvin's voice. "What is it with you, anyway? You and Rudd both talk like it was a crime to send those bastards rolling in the grass."

Rolling in the grass. That was exactly what had happened to Weyerhauser when Jaynes's second shot ripped through his belly.

Melvin walked away from the fire suddenly, into the cold dark layers of the night. The possemen were sacking out. Jaynes squatted near the fire alone, eating, a puzzled expression on his face. Bud Pryor, stripped down to long underwear and his boots, came over and stood beside the flames for a few minutes, warming his hands.

Dislike of Jaynes and a sort of wonder mingled on Pryor's fleshy face. He parted his thick lips as if to speak. But then he left the fire and settled into his sleeping bag, grunting.

The night was large and silent. Up toward the knife edge of Clover Mountain two men had scrambled across the rocks, crawling where slides had filled the trail. Two men running for their lives.

Melvin kept seeing it over and over.

Castagna's sentence had been commuted to life just two days short of the gas chamber. Strothers had never killed a man, but he was cold and ruthless. Marty Kaygo, who must have gone across the hill before the others, was in debt to the law 180 years. This was his third escape from prison.

They were all no good, predators against society. But . . . In the solemn night, with the tremendous peace of the mountains upon him, Bill Melvin stared uneasily at the line which must run from crime to punishment.

Ordinarily, he did not allow himself to be disturbed like this; but Jaynes, scraping the last of his supper from a tin plate, had kicked over the little wall that divided what men must do from what they think.

"I'll take the first watch," Melvin said.

Jaynes came out from the fire. He spoke in a low voice. "It's only 9 o'clock. Barker's got a flashlight. We could slip up on the slide-rock trail — there's patches of snow there — and see for sure if they all three crossed."

"Why?"

"If one is still here, he'll try to slip out of the basin tonight. We could lay out in that narrow place and nail him dead to rights."

"I'll take the first watch." Melvin walked deeper into the night, trembling from high-altitude fatigue, mouthing the sickening aftertaste of Jaynes's presence.

"Why not, Melvin?"

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"Go to bed!"

Sometimes a healthy man does not sleep well at great altitudes, and so it was with Melvin this night. When Jaynes relieved him, Melvin heard the beefy hunter going down the basin past the horses. He knew that Jaynes would make for a place where he could command the narrow entrance to the basin, and that he would lie there, patiently, his rifle ready.

Melvin wondered if his eyes would glitter in the dark.

Jaynes stayed his watch, and the watch of the man he did not waken for relief.

Dawn slid across the peaks. Light was there when dew and gloom were still heavy in the basin. The sheriff and Pryor cooked the last of the bacon and opened the last two cans of beans.

Jaynes saddled up and led his horse toward the fire before he ate. "What kind of rifle was it this — what was his name, Kaygo? — stole at the filling station?"

"A .30-06," Rudd said. There were pouches under his eyes this morning, and he looked his years. He stared through the smoke at Jaynes. "New one. He took five boxes of shells, too, Jaynes. They're hunting cartridges."

"I've got a few expanding noses myself," Jaynes said. "Let's get started."

Rudd spat to one side. "You're like a hog going to war."

Bud Pryor laughed. The other manhunters stared at Jaynes or at the ground. They seemed ashamed now, Melvin thought, to be a part of this thing. Or a part of Jaynes.

Pryor said explosively, "I'll go in after chow today, Sheriff. Me and Jaynes."

"No!" Jaynes said. "I can live on the country. Me and Melvin can keep going when the rest of you have to run for a restaurant."

Rudd said to Pryor, "You and Barker, then. It's closer now to Scott than it is to Studebaker, so we'll split up after we cross the hill. Try the radio again, Melvin. Maybe nobody will have to go in."

"No contact," Melvin said, later. "When we get to the top, we can reach out and make it."

They took the slide-rock trail from the dump at the side of the bunkhouse. In passing, Melvin noticed that the grouse feathers were almost entirely blown away.

Seventy years before, jack trains had used the trail; but now the years had slid into it. The posse led their horses. Sparks from steel shoes in the stretches where the ledge still showed drill marks; a clattering and a scramble, with the horses rolling their eyes when they had to cross the spills of dry-slippery rocks.

In the snowbanks, the tracks of three men; and one man had gone about a day before the others.

There lay the ridge, half a mile ahead. On the left, where they traveled, the mountain ran down wildly to ledges where no human being would ever set foot.

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They lost the little radio mare. She slipped and fell and then she was threshing over and the slide-rock ran with her. She struck a ledge and was gone. The rocks kept spilling down a thousand feet below.

Rudd patted the neck of his frightened gelding. "There went a damn good little mare."

Jaynes said, "They don't exactly give those radios away, either. My sleeping bag cost 62 bucks."

They came out on the wedge-top and went down three switchbacks to let the horses take a blow out of the wind. A dozen lakes were winking in the sunlight. The mountains on this side ran in a crazy pattern. Every major range in the United States runs north and south, with one exception; but from the pinpoints where a man must stand, the north-south coursing is often lost or does not exist at all.

There was no highway in sight, no smoke, just the vast expanse of timber with the gray-sharp slopes above and the shine of beaver meadows where little streams lay separated from each other by ridges 8000 feet high.

"A regiment could hide out down there all summer," Rudd said. "But these guys will most likely keep running downhill, hoping to hit a highway sooner or later."

Jaynes's rifle was in his hands, as usual when he was on foot. He pointed with it. "I know every inch of that country. I've fished and hunted all through it."

"Don't be a fool," Sheriff Rudd said. "I rode that country before you were born, and I discovered a new place every time I went out. And I could do the same for 100 years." Rudd shook his head. "Every inch of it . . .!"

Jaynes said, "I can find any tenderfoot that tries to hide out down there." He patted the stock of his rifle.

"Goddamn you, Jaynes! I'm sick of you!" Melvin cried. "Keep your mouth shut!"

Jaynes was surprised. "Now what did I say? Have you got a biting ulcer or something, Melvin?"

"Let's go on down," Rudd said.

Melvin's stomach held a knot that eased off slowly. For a moment he had seen the land without a man in it, forgetting even himself as he stood there on the mountain. But Jaynes would never let a man forget himself for long.

In the middle of the morning the green plane came over and circled them. The pilot was calling, Melvin knew, but they had no way now to listen or call back. After a while the plane soared away over the green timber and drifted on toward Scott.

They struck the timber. Fallen trees lay across the trail, slowing the horses. There were still three men ahead.

"Planes, radios, horses — what the hell good are they?" Jaynes said irritably. "In the end it comes down to men on foot closing in on each other."

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"Like you closed in on the Uncle Sam bunkhouse, huh?" Pryor asked. "Hand to hand, tooth and toenail."

"Strip down to a breechclout, Jaynes," Rudd said. "I'll give you my knife and you can go after Kaygo properly."

Barker said, "Yeah, why don't you do that, Jaynes? You big-mouthed bastard, you."

Barker had little imagination. He was a sullen man who would kill the fugitives as quickly as Jaynes. All that motivated Barker now, Melvin thought, was a desire to transfer the cause of his hunger and weariness to another human being. Jaynes had already been marked by him as a target.

"I don't understand you guys, so help me," Jaynes said.

Melvin felt a flash of pity for him; the man really did not understand. What made Jaynes tick probably was as obscure as the forces that had sent the men he so greatly wanted to kill into a life of crime. Somebody ought to be able to figure it out. . . .

The big buck flashed across the narrow lane in a split second. The smaller one that followed an instant later was going just as fast. Jaynes broke its neck with one shot.

The thought of fresh liver relieved some of Melvin's dislike of Jaynes. "Nice shooting, Jaynes."

"Thanks."

"I'll eat that thing without skinning it," Bud Pryor said. He had his knife out already and was trotting ahead.

Jaynes sat on a log and cleaned his rifle while Pryor and Melvin dressed the buck. Jaynes had merely glanced at it and turned away.

"He's larded up like first-class, grass-fed beef," Pryor said. "Lucky shot, Jaynes."

"I seldom miss a running target." Jaynes spoke absently, looking ahead at the trees.

Pryor sent Melvin a helpless look. "It sure looked lucky to me."

"No luck at all," said Jaynes. "It's simple if you have the eye for it."

Pryor made a motion with his knife as if to cut his own throat. He and Melvin laughed. For a few moments Jaynes was no problem to them.

"Sling it on a horse," Sheriff Rudd said. "We can eat when we get to Struthers' sawmill set."

"Struthers? That's one of the men we want," Jaynes said.

"Different spelling," Rudd said. "Jumbo Struthers has been dead for 40 years, and the sawmill hasn't run for 52 years."

"We could dig him up," Pryor said, grinning, "so Jaynes could shoot him."

For the first time Jaynes showed anger. "Why do you keep digging at me? What are we out here for, anyway? You act like there was something wrong in what we're doing!"

"We're here to bring back three men, dead *or* alive," Rudd said. "Let's go."

The trail expanded into a logging

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road, with live trees trying to close it out and dead trees trying to block it. Mosquitoes came singing in from a marsh on the left. Already tormented by the snags on fallen timber, the horses shook their heads as the insects buzzed their ears. Pryor kept swinging his hat at blowflies settling on the carcass of the deer. "The good old summertime," he said. "How'd you get me out here, Sheriff?"

"You were getting fat, so you volunteered."

The small talk irritated Jaynes. "We're not making much time," he said. Later, after a delay to lever aside a tangle of dead jackpines, he went ahead in a stooping posture for several steps. "One of the boys ain't doing so good all at once."

Melvin studied the tracks. One man had started to drag his leg; a second one was helping him. The third track was still older than these two. Farther down the road a punch mark appeared in the soil. One man was using a short pole as a cane.

Jaynes wanted to race away on the trail. "We'll have that one before long!"

"Hold up." The sheriff stopped to fill his pipe. "I'd say the fellow twisted a muscle or sprained his ankle trying to jump that tangle we just cleared out. The other one will leave him, that's sure."

"The old ranger lean-to in Boston Park must be pretty close," Jaynes said. "Half a mile, I'd say."

"About a mile," Rudd said.

Melvin knew about it, the big lean-to sometimes used by fishermen and hunters. Man had made it, and the fact would seem important to the men ahead. Considering the tracks of the injured fugitive, Melvin wondered whether the convict would last to Boston Park.

"If he's bunged up as bad as it looks, he's likely ready to quit," Rudd said.

"He won't give up," Jaynes said. "He'll make a stand."

The sheriff narrowed his eyes at Jaynes. "Why will he, if he's hurt?"

"If he's been left at that lean-to, he's the loneliest man in the world right now," Melvin put in.

"Yeah?" Jaynes kept edging ahead. "I'm not walking up on that hut to find out how lonely he is."

"Nobody is," Rudd said. "When we get close, two men will take the horses. The rest of us will cut off into the timber and come in from all sides of the lean-to. He may not be there at all."

The lean-to was set between two trees on high ground, clear of the swamp that edged the beaver ponds. Generations of outdoorsmen had piled boughs along the sides and on top until the shelter was a rust-brown mass. That it had not been burned by a careless match long ago spoke tersely of the nature of the men who came far into the mountains.

Melvin and Sheriff Rudd came to the edge of the trees a hundred yards apart. They waited for Pryor, on the right. Barker and Jaynes were to

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ease out of the trees on the left, Barker to cover the back of the shelter, Jaynes to prevent escape farther to the left.

There had been a fire recently among the blackened stones before the lean-to. Fine ashes stirred there, lifting to a little wind that rolled across the beaver ponds and whispered through the tall swamp grass.

Melvin saw Pryor come to the edge of the trees and signal with his hand. Barker slipped to the cover of a windfall behind the shelter. He wagged his rifle.

Inside the lean-to a man cleared his throat.

Melvin sank to one knee behind a log.

The sheriff said, "Come out of there! You're boxed. Walk out with your hands up!"

"I can't walk," a voice replied.

"Come out of there. We'll rip that place apart with bullets if I have to ask again."

The brittle needles scraped against each other. A chunky man whose face was black with beard came on hands and knees from the hut. He was wearing a soiled, torn green uniform, too small for him. One pants leg was gone below the knee.

"Toss your pistol away," Rudd ordered.

"No gun." The man clawed against one of the trees. He pulled himself erect. "No gun, you stinking, dirty —" He started to fall and made a quick grab at the crosspiece of the shelter.

A rifle blasted from the edge of the timber beyond Barker. The man at the lean-to fell. He was dead, Melvin was sure. "Watch him! Watch him!" Jaynes called. "It's just his arm!"

Melvin and the sheriff walked in then. The man had been shot through the left hand, a thick hand, by a soft-nosed hunting bullet. The palm was torn away and the fingers were spread like the spokes of a shattered wheel. The man rolled on his side and put his broken hand under his arm.

"My leg is cracked before." He cursed. "Now look at it!" The leg was really broken now; it had twisted under when the man fell. Melvin searched him and found two packs of cigarettes.

Barker came around the hut. Jaynes arrived on the run. "I could just see his arm when he grabbed for his gun!"

"He grabbed, all right," Sheriff Rudd said. "To keep from falling on a busted leg."

"Oh!" Jaynes stared down. "It looked to me like —"

"Shut up." Rudd yelled at the timber where the two men were holding the horses. "Bring 'em on!" There was a first-aid kit on Melvin's horse.

"Which one is this?" Jaynes asked.

"Sam Castagna." Suspected of seven murders, convicted of one, sentence commuted to life. "Where's Strothers, Sam?"

"Run out on me." With his face

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against the brown needles Castagna tried to spit explosively. It merely dribbled from his mouth and hung in his black beard. He cursed in Italian, glaring up at Jaynes.

Barker said, "No gun anywhere around the hut. They had two sawed-offs and two .38 pistols, besides the rifle Kaygo swiped at the filling station."

The horses came in at the trot. Pryor circled the swamp and plodded through the grass. He looked at the wounded man. "Castagna, huh? Nice boy who likes to put bombs on car-starters. The other two are still going down the trail, Sheriff."

"Straight to a highway," Rudd said. "Let's patch him up and move on."

"I'm going to eat here," Pryor said, "if you have to leave me. I'm going to beat the blowflies to some of that deer." He began to build a fire.

Melvin and Barker made splints for Castagna's broken leg. They wrapped his hand. He watched them stolidly. When they pulled his leg, he ground his teeth and sweated. Melvin got him a drink of water afterward.

"Thanks." Castagna held the cup in a trembling hand, slopping part of the water down his chin and into the thick black hairs at the base of his neck.

"Where's Strothers and Kaygo, Castagna?" Jaynes asked.

Castagna looked hungrily at the meat Pryor was roasting on a green limb. He lay back on the ground and closed his eyes. There was a depression under his head and it caused his face to tilt straight into the sun. Melvin took off his coat and rolled it under the wounded man's head.

They squatted around the fire, roasting cutlets chopped from the loin with a hand ax, too hungry to bother with a frying pan. Blood from half-raw meat ran down their chins when they chewed.

None of us is far removed from the wolf, Melvin thought; but there is a difference between men like Rudd and Sam Castagna. There has to be. Yet where was the difference between Castagna and Jaynes, who cleaned his rifle before he ate?

Melvin glanced at the gleaming weapon, laid carefully aside on the dry grass. He felt an urge to hurl the rifle far out into the beaver pond.

Sheriff Rudd ground his meat moodily. "I never used to stop when I was on the chase. We stop to gorge ourselves while a desperate man keeps going. The difference is he *has* to get away and we don't *have* to catch him."

"Him? Who do you mean?" Jaynes asked. "Why don't we have to catch him?"

"Oh, hell," Rudd said. "Gimme the salt, Barker."

"I don't understand what —" Jaynes said.

"Before we leave here, Jaynes, you throw into that pond every damn hunting bullet you got," Rudd said. "I'm going to watch you do it."

They all looked at Jaynes. He could not grasp the reason for their

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hostility. "Shells cost money. I'll use that old coffee can over there and bury them under the lean-to. Next fall I'll be through here hunting."

"Do that then," Rudd said. "Every damn soft-nose you got." But Rudd seemed to find no satisfaction in the trifling victory.

He knew he was only scratching at the surface, Melvin thought.

The sheriff twisted around toward Castagna. "Some deer meat, Sam?"

"Yeah. Yeah, let me try it." Castagna ate greedily, and then he lost everything before they could get him onto a horse.

The green plane was cruising southwest of them. A few minutes later it came over Boston Park, dipping low. It went southwest again, circling six or seven times.

"Uh-huh," Rudd said.

"He must be over the Shewalter Meadows," Jaynes said. "That's all down-timber between here and there."

"Not if you know the way from the sawmill set." Rudd swung up. "Catch Castagna there if he starts to fall."

There were still two sets of man-tracks down the logging road. Just before they reached the sawmill site they found a sawed-off shotgun laid across a log, pointing toward one of the sawdust piles near the creek. Under it an arrow mark scratched in the black soil pointed in the same direction.

"Now that's a cute trick," Jaynes said. He sighted through his 'scope at the sawdust piles, age-brown mounds blending into the wilderness. He was suspicious, but he was confused.

"It reads to me that Strothers wants to quit, and wants to be sure we know it," Rudd said.

"Suppose he's still got the pistol? Suppose it's Kaygo?" Jaynes asked.

"Most likely Kaygo is over there where the plane was circling," Melvin said. Kaygo had left the others at the Uncle Sam Mine. The sheriff, at least, was sure of that, and Melvin had accepted it. Still, he did not like the quiet of the sawdust piles, warm and innocent-looking out there by the creek.

Rudd said, "Come on, Melvin. The rest of you stay here. Take Castagna off the horse and let him lay down a while."

"I'd better —" Jaynes said.

"Stay right here," the sheriff said.

Rudd and Melvin leaped the creek and tramped upon the spongy surface of the sawdust piles. In a little hollow of the shredded wood they found their man, asleep.

His blond whiskers were short and curly. The sun had burned his face. His green shirt, washed recently in the stream, was spread near him and now it was dry. His heavy prison shoes were set neatly together near his feet.

"Strothers, all right," Rudd said. "Wake up!"

The man was snoring gently. He jerked a little but he did not rouse until Rudd tossed one of the shoes

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on his stomach. Strothers opened his eyes and yawned.

"What kept you so long?" he asked.

Cold and deadly, the bulletins had read; he had never killed a man, but he had always entered banks prepared to kill. He had studied law, and later, engineering. It was said that he could have been successful in either. Now he sat on a pile of sawdust in the wilderness, ready to go back to the isolation cells.

"Local yokels, eh? I didn't think those lazy bastards of guards would come this far. Got anything to smoke, Constable?"

"Where's Kaygo?" the sheriff asked.

Strothers yawned again. He felt his feet. "Talk about blisters!" He began to put on his shoes. "Why, Marty left us at a rat hole on the side of a cliff day before yesterday."

"We know that," Rudd said.

"That's why I mentioned it." Strothers reached toward his shirt.

"Hold it!" Melvin picked up the shirt. There was no weight in it, nothing under it. He tossed it to Strothers, who rose and began to put it on.

"Where's the other .38?" Rudd asked mildly.

"The other? So you got Weyerhauser. Can I have a smoke?"

Melvin lit a cigarette and tossed it to Strothers. The sheriff and his deputy glanced quickly at each other.

"I don't know who's got it," Strothers said. The horses were coming out of the timber.

He saw Castagna. "Did you ask Sam?"

The sheriff's eyes were tight. He spoke easily, "Sam's clean. You look clean. So Kaygo's got it. Why'd you give up, Strothers?"

"Too much of nothing here. No future." Strothers grinned, dragging on his cigarette, watching the horses from the corners of his eyes. The surface was smooth, but there was steel savagery underneath. Castagna was a bully who had graduated to bombs on starters and bundles of dynamite against the bedroom walls of gambling kings; Strothers was everything the long F.B.I. reports said.

"You could have given up with Castagna," Melvin said.

"That two-bit character! I play it alone." Strothers puffed his smoke. "Do I get some chow?"

"Yeah," Rudd said. "Half-done venison."

"Raw will be fine, Constable."

"Walk on over toward the horses," Rudd said. "When I say stop — stop."

"Sure, Constable. Just don't stall. I want to get home as soon as possible. I'm doing some leather work that can't be neglected."

Not the usual bravado of a petty criminal — Strothers was too coldly intelligent for that. He was spreading it on lightly for another purpose. He wouldn't have much luck with Rudd, Melvin knew. Let him find it out.

Strothers limped ahead of them. "When my last blister broke, that was when I decided to hell with it."

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"Right there, Strothers," Rudd said, when they were twenty feet from the horses. With the exception of Jaynes, the posse was relaxed. The first heat of the chase had been worn from them, and this third easy victory coming toward them was nothing to cause excitement.

Rudd nodded at Melvin, making a circle with his finger in the air. Melvin walked wide around Strothers and freed his lariat from the saddle.

"The great big Strothers, he comes easy," Castagna said sullenly.

Strothers ignored Castagna; his eyes were on the rope in Melvin's hands. Barker and the others looked at Strothers dully, but Jaynes sensed what they did not. He pushed his 'scope sight down and raised his rifle.

"Never mind!" Rudd said sharply, standing several paces behind Strothers. "Put that rifle down, Jaynes. Drop your pants, Strothers."

Strothers smiled. "Now look, Constable . . ." He was watching the loop in Melvin's hand.

And that was when Rudd stepped in and slammed Strothers to the ground with the butt of his rifle. Melvin drove in quickly then. Strothers was enough for the two of them for a while, but they got his arms tied behind him at last.

The little automatic, flat, fully loaded, was tied with strips of green cloth from Castagna's pants leg to the inside of Strothers's thigh. Castagna cursed bitterly, clinging to the saddle horn with his one good hand.

"Why didn't you search him right at first?" Jaynes demanded angrily.

"It takes more steam out of them to let them go right up to where it looks like it's going to work," the sheriff said. "Build a fire, Pryor. We may as well eat again before we split up."

Strothers chewed his meat with good appetite. He had struggled like a wolf, but that was done now and his intelligence was at work again. "What tipped it, Constable — the cigarettes?"

"Partly," Rudd said. "You wouldn't have left both packs with Sam unless you figured to be with him soon. That wasn't too much, but I knew you would never go back down the river and let them say Ora L. Strothers was caught asleep and gave up without a fight. You really were asleep, too — on purpose."

"Sure. I got the nerve for things like that. It made it look real." Strothers's good nature was back, but he was not thinking of his words. His mind, Melvin knew, was thinking far ahead now, to another plan, setting himself against walls and locks and ropes and everything that could be used to restrain a man physically, pitting his fine mind against all the instruments of the thing called society.

There was a lostness in him that appalled Melvin. Strothers was a cold wind running from a foggy gorge back in the dawn age of mankind. The wind could never warm or change or remain confined. Compared to Strothers, Sam Castagna was just a lumbering animal that knocked weaker animals out of the way.

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"You would have taken Castagna with you, if you could have knocked a couple of us off and got to the horses?" Melvin asked.

"Sure," Strothers said. "We planned it that way."

That was talk to be repeated in the prison yard, to be passed along the corridors of the cell block. Talk to fit the code. But not to feed the vanity of Ora L. Strothers, because it was a lie. Let Castagna, lying feverishly on the ground in Melvin's jacket, believe what Strothers said. Castagna had been left behind to build up the illusion that desperate men would surrender without a fight. That he was injured and had to be left was not primary in Strothers's mind; it was merely helpful coincidence.

"Which one of us was to 've been first?" Melvin asked.

Strothers wiped his lips. "You, I thought. Then I changed my mind." He glanced at Jaynes.

"Yeah," Jaynes said. "I read you like a book. I wish you had tried something, Strothers."

The two men stared at each other. The antagonism that separated them was as wide as the sky.

"I'll bet you're the one shot Sam," Strothers said. "Did you shoot Joe Weyerhauser, too?"

Jaynes did not answer. Watching him, Melvin thought: He lacks the evil power of Strothers' intelligence, and he lacks the strength of natural good. He doesn't know what he is, and he knows it.

Strothers smiled. "I've taken half a million from the banks and never had to shoot a man. You, Snake Eyes, you're just a punk on the other side because you don't have the guts and brains of men like me. How about it?"

Jaynes leaped up. His wasp voice broke when he cursed Strothers. He gripped his rifle and stood with the butt poised to smash into Strothers's face.

"Whoa there, Jaynes!" Sheriff Rudd said, but it was not he who stopped the rifle. With his legs tied and one arm bound behind his back, Strothers looked at Jaynes and smiled, and Jaynes lowered his rifle and walked away. After a few steps he turned toward the creek and went there, pretending to drink.

Barker and Pryor stared at Strothers. "Don't call *me* any of your names," Barker growled.

Strothers looked at him as he might have glanced at a noisy child; and then he forgot them all. His mind was once more chewing facts and plans, even as his strong teeth chewed meat.

If this man had been led by Marty Kaygo, what kind of man was Kaygo? thought Melvin.

Rudd said, "I'll take everybody in but you and Jaynes, Melvin. Do you feel up to staying on the trail?"

There was no place where a plane could set down to pick up Castagna. Two and a half days out, Melvin estimated. Rudd would need five men to keep an eye on Strothers day and night. They were out of food, too.

"All right," Melvin said.

Jaynes had overheard. He came

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back from the creek. "I'm staying, too."

Strothers smiled.

"I'll send the green plane over Shewalter Meadows three days from now," Rudd said. "With grub. Now what else will you need?"

"Send me another coat," Melvin said. "Send Jaynes another sleeping bag. We both better have packs, too."

The sheriff nodded. He put Strothers on a horse and tied him there. They lifted Castagna to the saddle again. He was going to suffer plenty before they reached the highway. Castagna looked at Melvin and said thickly, "Thanks for the coat."

Strothers smiled at Melvin from the corner of his eyes. The smile said: Chump!

A hundred yards down the creek a logging road took off to the left, and there went the tracks of Marty Kaygo. Melvin and Jaynes walked into second-growth timber. The sounds of the horses died away. Under his belt Melvin was carrying the pistol he had taken from Strothers.

Jaynes said, "I damn near smashed that Strothers's ugly face for him."

"Uh-huh."

"You can't hit a man tied up like that, not even a pen bird."

"No."

"Of course not," Jaynes said.

The road began to angle to the right, along a ridge.

"This won't take us straight to where the plane spotted Kaygo," Jaynes said. "Let's cut into the timber."

"I'm staying with his tracks. I don't know what that plane was circling over."

The road turned down the ridge again, on the side away from Shewalter Meadows. Kaygo's tracks were still there, but Jaynes was mightily impatient. "I'm going straight over the ridge," he said.

"Go ahead."

"Where will I meet you then?"

"At the Meadows."

"You sure?" Jaynes asked doubtfully.

"This old road runs into one hell of a swamp before long. I'm betting he went to the Meadows, but I'm going to follow his trail all the way."

They separated. Melvin was glad. He wanted to reduce the chase to the patient unwinding of a trail, to an end that was nothing more than law and duty; and he could not think of it that way so long as Jaynes was with him.

Where the swamp began, Kaygo had turned at once up the ridge. There was something in that which spoke of the man's quality, of an ability to sense the lie of a country. Most city men would have blundered deep into the swamp before deciding to turn.

Jaynes was right about down-timber on the ridge, fire-killed trees that had stood for years before rot took their roots and wind sent them crashing. Melvin went slowly. Kaygo had done the same, and before long

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Melvin noticed that the man had traveled as a woodsman does, stepping over nothing that could be walked around.

Kaygo would never exhaust himself in blind, disorderly flight. What kind of man was he?

Going down the west side of the ridge, Melvin stopped when a grouse exploded from the ground near a rotting spruce log. He drew the pistol and waited until he saw two others near the log, frozen in their protective coloration. He shot one through the head, and five more flew away.

Now an instrument of the law had broken the law for a second time during this chase; but there were, of course, degrees of breakage. A man like Strothers no doubt could make biting comments on the subject.

Melvin pulled the entrails from the bird and went on, following Kaygo's trail. The man had an eye for terrain, all right. He made few mistakes that cost him time and effort, and that was rare in any man crossing unfamiliar, wooded country.

A woodsman at some time in his life? Melvin went back over Kaygo's record. Thirty-five years old. Sixteen of those years spent in reformatories and prisons. An interesting talker. Athletic. Generally armed, considered extremely dangerous. Approach with caution. The record fell into the glib pattern of the words under the faces on the bulletin board in Rudd's office.

Gambles heavily. If forced to work, seeks employment as clerk in clothing store . . . There was nothing Melvin could recall to indicate that Kaygo had ever been five miles from pavement.

The sun was getting low and the timber was already gathering coolness in its depths when Melvin came out on a long slope that ran down to the Meadows, two miles away.

Where the sun still lay on a bare spot near a quartz outcrop Melvin stopped, puzzled by what he saw. The mark of the steel butt-plate of Kaygo's rifle and the imprint of his shoes, one flat, the other showing no heel print, said that Kaygo had squatted near the ant hill; four cigarette butts crushed into the ground said that he had been here for some time.

Coolness had diminished activity of the ants, but they were still seething in and out of their dome of sand and pine needles; and Kaygo had squatted there for perhaps an hour to watch.

It was Melvin's experience that some perverseness in man causes him to step upon ant hills or to kick them in passing. This one was undisturbed. Kaygo had watched and gone away. Melvin had done the same thing many times.

What if I have and what if he did also? he asked himself. Does that change what I have to do? But as he went on, Melvin kept wondering what Kaygo had thought as he squatted beside the ant hill.

Near dusk Melvin lost the trail where the wide arm of a swamp came up from the drainage basin of the

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Meadows. But Kaygo was headed that way, Melvin was sure. One gentle turn too far to the left, back there on the long slope, would have sent Kaygo into the ragged canyons near the lower end of the Meadows.

He must have spotted the place from the top of Clover Mountain; but seeing from the heights and finding from a route through timber-choked country are two different things.

Kaygo had a fine sense of distance and direction, though. I can grant him that, Melvin thought, without feeling anything else about him to impede my purpose. The purpose — and Melvin wondered why he had to keep restating it — was to bring Marty Kaygo out, dead or alive.

On the edge of Shewalter Meadows, where the grass stood waist-high to a man all over the flooded ground and the beaver runs that led to the ponds out in the middle, Melvin stopped behind a tree and scanned the open space. There was only half-light now, but that was enough.

Beavers were making ripples in the ponds and trout were leaping for their evening feeding. The Meadows lay in a great dog-leg, and the upper part was cut from Melvin's view by spruce trees and high willows. The best windfalls for sleeping cover were up there, and that was where Jaynes would be, undoubtedly.

Let him stay there tonight alone. Sooner or later Melvin would have to rejoin him, and that would be soon enough. Melvin went back into the timber and cooked his grouse. He ate half of it and laid the rest in the palm of a limb, head-high.

The night came in with a gentle rush. He dozed off on top of his sleeping bag, to awaken chilled and trembling some time later. The night was windless, the ground stony. Melvin built up the fire and warmed himself by it before getting into his sleeping bag.

Dead or alive. The thought would not submerge.

One Kaygo was a vagueness written on a record; Melvin had learned of another Kaygo today. They made a combination that would never give up.

If Melvin had been here just to fish and loaf, to walk through the dappled fall of sunshine in the trees, and — yes, to be caught away from himself while watching the endless workings of an ant hill; to see the sun come and go on quietness; to see the elk thrusting their broad muzzles underwater to eat; to view all the things that are simple and understandable . . . then, he knew, he would be living for a while as man was meant to live.

You are Bill Melvin, a deputy sheriff. He is a man called Kaygo, an escaped murderer.

Dead or alive . . .

He came from dreamless sleep when the log ends of the fire were no longer flaming but drizzling smoke across a bed of coals. He felt the presence near him by the rising of the hackles on his neck, from deep memories forgotten by the human race.

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Carefully, not breaking the even tenor of his breathing, he worked one hand up to the pistol on the head shield of the sleeping bag.

The man was squatted by the fire with a rifle across his knees. His hair was curling brown that caught a touch of redness from the glow of embers. The light outlined a sandy beard, held steady on wide cheekbones, and lost itself in the hollows under massive brow arches. The man's trousers were muddy, at least as high as the knees, where the fabric was strained smooth by his position. They might have been any color. But there was no doubt that the shirt was green.

The face by itself was enough.

It was Marty Kaygo.

He was eating what was left of Melvin's grouse.

He turned the carcass in his hands, gnawing, chewing; and all the while his face was set toward the shadows where Melvin lay.

Slowly Melvin worked the pistol along the edge of the ground until, lying on his side, he raised it just a trifle. The front sight was a white bead that lined across the coals to Kaygo's chest. Melvin's thumb pushed the safety down.

Long rifle cartridges, just a spot of lead that could sing over space and kill. Kaygo, the cop-killer. Speak to him, tell him to put up his hands and let his rifle fall. If he swung the rifle to fire, the pistol could sing and kill.

From where came the whisper that fire and food must be shared even with a deadly enemy? From the jungle all around that might pull them both beneath its slime an instant later?

The sabre-tooth and the great reptiles were out there in the night. And men were men together, if only for a moment. The jungle was not gone, merely changed.

Melvin let the pistol rest upon the ground.

Marty Kaygo rose. He was not a tall man. Even in his prison shoes he moved lightly as he stepped to a tree and replaced the carcass of the grouse. He grinned, still looking toward where Melvin lay.

And then he was gone.

Melvin lay a long time before he fell asleep again.

When he rose in the bitter cold of morning, he went at once to the dead fire. There were the tracks. He took the grouse from the limb. One leg was untouched.

Staring out to where the first long-slanting rays of the sun were driving mist from the beaver ponds and wet grass, Melvin held the chilled grouse in his hands.

What's the matter with me?

The truth was, Jaynes was Melvin and Melvin was Jaynes, great developments of the centuries; and Kaygo did not fit where they belonged. But . . .

Melvin shivered.

He went out of the timber into the sunshine, and he sat down to let it warm him while he ate the rest of the grouse. There before him, leading through the gray mud out toward the

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wickerwork of the beaver dams, were the tracks of Kaygo. He had crossed the boggy ground by night, walking the beaver dams above deep water, returning the same way. It was not an easy feat even in daytime.

I wish I could talk to him, Melvin thought. I wish . . .

The shot was a cracking violation of the wilderness quiet. It came from somewhere around the dog-leg of the Meadows.

Melvin went back to the camp site and got his gear.

Before he turned the dog-leg, he saw Jaynes coming toward him. Jaynes stopped and waited.

"What the hell happened to you, Melvin?" There was blood on Jaynes's shirt.

"I followed his trail, just as I said I would. You shoot a deer?"

"Yeah. That's one thing there's plenty of here. Kaygo's around. I saw his tracks in the upper part of the Meadows last night. We'll get him. I know every inch —"

"Let's get at the deer."

They roasted meat, and then Jaynes was impatient to be off.

"Just hold your steam," said Melvin. "We've got another two days before the plane drops chow, so we're going to start drying some of this meat."

"There's lots of deer."

"We'll dry some of this. We don't know where that plane will drop our supplies, or what they'll be like when we get to them. And you're not going to shoot a deer every day, Jaynes."

They cut the meat in thin strips and laid it on the gray twigs of a fallen tree until the branches were festooned with dangling brown meat. Camp-robber birds were there at once, floating in, snatching.

"How you going to stop that?" Jaynes asked.

"By staying here. I'm going to do some smoking with a willow fire, too. Take a turn around the Meadows. See what you can find out. You know every inch of the land."

"I'll do that." Jaynes took his rifle and strode away.

He was back at noon. "Where'd you camp, Melvin?"

Melvin told him.

"Well, he was there, *this morning*. He crossed the swamp and went back the same way. He's in the timber on this side somewhere. He's getting smart now about covering his tracks."

"What's he eating?" Melvin asked cleverly.

"I don't know, and I don't care. He slept one night under a windfall. Where'd he learn that, Melvin?" Jaynes was worried.

"I think it must come to him naturally. He's probably enjoying more freedom right now than he's had in his whole life."

Jaynes grunted. He eyed the tree that was serving as a drying rack. "Hey! Do you suppose we could pull him in with that?" He looked all around at the fringe of trees. "Say we go down into the timber on the other side and then circle back to that little knob over there . . . About 325

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yards." Jaynes rubbed the oily sheen of his rifle barrel. "One shot, Melvin."

"You think he's hungry enough to try it?"

"He must be."

"The birds will scatter our meat."

"Part of a lousy deer, or one jailbird! What's the matter with you, Melvin?"

The venison was not going to cure before the plane came in and Melvin knew it. He had stalled long enough.

They went a half-mile beside the lower Meadows. On the way Jaynes stepped sidewise to jump into an ant hill and twist his feet; and then he went on, stamping ants loose from his shoes. "He must be hungry enough by now."

They went back through the timber and crept behind a log on the little hill across the field from their camp. The smoky birds were having a merry time with the meat.

Now Jaynes was patient. His eyes caught every movement across the park, and his position did not seem to strain his muscles. They stayed until the shadows lowered cold upon their backs. It was then that they heard the rifle-shot somewhere in the lower Meadows, two miles away.

"He's got his own meat." Melvin laughed.

Jaynes rose. "What's so damn funny about it?"

Melvin had wrapped his undershirt around a venison haunch, but the blowflies had got to it anyway. He brushed the white larva away.

They roasted meat and ate in silence.

Marty Kaygo was still around Shewalter Meadows. They cut his sign the next day, and they found where he had killed the deer. The convict was here, and it seemed that he intended to stay.

Jaynes was infuriated. And he was speechless for a while when they returned to camp that night and found that Kaygo had stolen Melvin's sleeping bag.

"Who are the tenderfeet around here?" Melvin laughed again.

"You don't act like you want to catch him! By God, I do, and I'll stay here all summer to do it, if necessary!"

"To catch him?"

"To kill him! I'm going to gut-shoot him for this little trick!"

"You would have, anyway." There was no humor now in Kaygo's stealing the sleeping bag.

The plane came in on the afternoon of the third day. Clouds were scudding across the peaks and the pilot was in a hurry to beat out a local storm. He banked sharply to look down at the two men standing in the open dryness of the upper Meadows.

He went on east, high above the timber. They saw him fighting a tricky wind. On the next bank he kicked out the box. The parachute became a white cone. Lining out with a tailwind boosting him, the pilot sped away toward Scott.

"If he had any brains he'd've stayed to make sure we got it," Jaynes said. "Typical State employee."

A great wind-front flowing in from

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the mountains struck them with a chill that spoke of the rain soon to follow. Melvin watched the plane bouncing jerkily in downdrafts above the canyons. "The pilot's all right, Jaynes."

"Look at that thing drift!"

They knew for sure after another few moments that the box would not land in the upper Meadows. Melvin said, "Wouldn't it be something if it lit right at Kaygo's feet?"

"Big fine joke, huh?"

They trotted across the creek and down along the edge of the Big Shewalter to keep the 'chute in sight. They were a long way from it when they saw it splash into the water near the opposite side of the flooded area. An instant later the rain boiled down on them.

"I hope they had sense enough to put the stuff in cans." Jaynes turned up the collar of his jacket.

The ponds were dancing froth now. Through the mist they saw Kaygo run from the timber and wade out after the box.

Jaynes dropped to one knee. He pushed his 'scope down and began to click the sight-adjustment. "Eight hundred yards," he muttered. His rifle bellowed with the thunder on the mountains. "Where'd I hit?"

"I couldn't tell."

The first hard blast of rain was sweeping on. Jaynes fired again, and this time Melvin saw the bullet strike the water to the left of Kaygo, chest-deep now, towing the box to shore with the shroud-lines of the chute.

"About five feet to the left," Melvin said.

Kaygo sprawled into the grass when the next shot came.

"That did it," Melvin said.

"No! He ducked."

Kaygo raised up. Skidding the box over wet grass and mud, he reached timber while Jaynes tried two more shots. Over that distance, through wind and rain, Jaynes had performed well — but Kaygo was still free.

Kaygo's boldness was worth applause, but Melvin felt only a bleak apathy. The end had been delayed, that was all.

"Come on!" Jaynes said.

"Across that open swamp? No, thanks. We'll work through the timber."

"He's got our stuff!"

"He's got a rifle, too."

The box had been fastened with wing-nuts, easy to tap loose. The packs Melvin had asked for were gone, and the jacket, and about three-fourths of the food, Melvin estimated. The sleeping bag had been unrolled. Rain was filtering through the pines on a manila envelope containing a note.

They peered into the gloom of the wet forest. It was no time to press Kaygo hard, and they both knew it.

While Jaynes raged, Melvin read the note.

"Rudd started in at noon today with big posse. He says not to take any chances. He says there were *two* .22 pistols and a hunting knife taken from the filling station."

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"That's a big help!" Jaynes cursed the weather, the pilot, and the stupidity of circumstance.

"I told you on Clover Mountain I was sick of you, Jaynes. Now shut up! You're lucky Kaygo didn't slice your sleeping bag to pieces or throw it into the water."

"I'm fed up with you, too, Melvin! You didn't even try to shoot a while ago. You act like the stinking louse is your brother!"

My brother. The thought plowed through Melvin, leaving a fresh wake. It was not fashionable to speak of men as brothers; you killed your brother, just like anybody else.

They plodded toward camp, carrying the cans of food in their hands. The labels began to soak off. Melvin finished the job on the cans he was holding.

"That's smart," Jaynes said. "Now what's in them?"

"You're right, they're no good to us any more. A hungry man has to know what he's getting." Melvin began to hurl the cans into a beaver pond, until Jaynes pleaded with him.

"Then shut your mouth for a while!" Melvin cried.

They went on to camp through a cold rain that soaked into Melvin's soul.

"Soup!" Jaynes said later, when they sat under a dripping tree before a smoking fire. "Kaygo's back in the timber having hot coffee and canned chicken."

Jaynes could not destroy everything, for he had the unrealized power to give laughter. Melvin began to laugh while Jaynes stared at him angrily. Was it the sound of laughter, as well as the smell of fire, that caused the monsters of the long-ago jungle to raise their heads in fear?

"I said I'd get Kaygo if it took all summer. You sit here and laugh some more, Melvin. *I'll get him!*"

They found the second pack the next morning, empty, hanging on a tree. "He's cached part of the grub somewhere," Jaynes growled. "He couldn't have put it all in one pack. Smart! He did it in the rain, and now we can't backtrack him."

But they could trail him in the fresh dampness. Kaygo had realized that, too; he had gone far south of the Meadows, and on a rocky ridge they lost his trail. The ridge was a great spur that ran down from Spearhead Mountain, bucking through lesser cross-ridges arrogantly. The lower end of it, Melvin knew, was not eight miles from the highway.

"Maybe he's clearing out," Jaynes said. "He read that note about Rudd. He knows he's going to get it. He's headed for the highway now. Somebody else will get him, after all we've done!"

"Pathetic, ain't it?" Melvin looked at Spearhead Mountain. "Maybe he went that way. He likes mountains."

"What do you mean?"

"Nothing you'd understand. He's gone toward Spearhead, Jaynes."

"The highway! I'm going after him, Melvin. If I don't cut his trail by the time I hit Bandbox Creek, I'll

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come back. Don't sneak off this time and camp by yourself. He could have walked right in on you that night."

"Yes, he could have killed me, I suppose."

Jaynes's eyes narrowed. "Those tracks beside your fire the next morning — one of yours was on top of one of his, Melvin. He sneaked in while you were asleep, didn't he? And you were ashamed to mention it to me! It's a wonder he didn't take your rifle and sleeping bag right from under you. I'll mention that to Rudd when he gets here."

"You do that, Jaynes." Harlan Rudd had shared food and fire with outlaws in the old days, and he was not ashamed to talk about it now that he was sheriff. "Get out of my sight, Jaynes, before I forget I'm a brother to you, too!"

"Brother?" Jaynes gave Melvin a baffled look before he started down the ridge.

There was something Kaygo could not have known about this ridge: It appeared to be the natural route to Spearhead, but higher up it was a jumble of tree-covered cliffs.

Melvin stayed on it only until he found where Kaygo had slipped from his careful walking on rocks and left a mark which he had tried to smooth away. Then Melvin left the ridge and took a roundabout, but faster, route toward Spearhead.

He went too rapidly. In mid-afternoon he saw Kaygo far below him, between two curving buttresses of the mountain. The fugitive was not pushing himself.

While Melvin watched through his glasses, Kaygo removed the stolen pack and lay down in a field of columbines, pillowing his head on the stolen sleeping bag. The wind was cold on Melvin's sweating skin as he hugged his vantage point behind the rocks.

Jaynes might have made a shot from here; he would have tried, although the range was 400 yards greater than yesterday across the Big Shewalter. Melvin knew his own rifle would do no more than scare Kaygo down the hill.

Like hunting sheep, he thought. You have to wait and try to make them blunder into you.

Kaygo lay there for an hour. He was not asleep. He moved occasionally, but mostly he lay there looking at the sky and clouds.

He was wallowing in freedom; that was it. Damn him! He would not do what fugitives are supposed to do. He insisted on acting like a man enjoying life.

My brother down there, Melvin thought. Yes, and I'll kill him when he comes near enough on the saddle of the mountain.

Kaygo rose at last, but he did not go. He stretched his arms to the sky, as if he would clutch a great section of it. Then he sat down and smoked a cigarette.

The sweat was tight and dry on Melvin. The wind scampered through his clothing. Of course I have to kill

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him, he told himself. He's found something he loves so much he won't be taken from it any other way.

Kaygo went up at last. Melvin slipped behind the rib of the mountain and climbed steadily. The wind was growing quiet now. There was a sullen heaviness in the air. It would rain again today.

Melvin was far ahead when he took a position among rocks that overlooked the saddle. He could see Kaygo, still in no hurry, coming up the harder way, coming over a red iron dike that had made the notch on Spearhead back when man clutched his club and splashed toward refuge as the clamor broke out in the forest.

It was his job. Society paid him, Melvin reminded himself. Climb faster Marty Kaygo. You will have your chance to go back where you belong, and when you refuse the job will be done quickly.

The air grew heavily quiet. Melvin blinked when he heard a tiny snap and saw a blue spark run along his rifle barrel. He rubbed his hand against his woolen shirt. His palm crackled with pinpoint sparks and the fibers of the sleeve tried to follow the hand away. He stroked his hair and heard the little noises and felt the hair rising.

All this was not uncommon on the heights in summer when a storm was making, but Melvin had never experienced it before. It gave him a weird sensation.

Kaygo came into the saddle when the air was fully charged. He jumped when blue light ran along his rifle barrel. He was then two hundred yards away from Melvin. He would have to pass much closer. Kaygo stared in wonder at his rifle, and then at the leaden sky.

He held up his hunting knife. Sparks played upon the point. Kaygo laughed. He raised both knife and rifle and watched the electricity come to them.

A little later he discovered steel was not necessary to draw static from the swollen air. Kaygo's fingers, held aloft, drew sparks. He did a dance upon the rocks, shouting his wonder and pleasure. Strange balls of light ran along the iron dike and the air was filled with a sterile odor.

This day on Spearhead Mountain, Marty Kaygo roared with joy.

Melvin had never heard laughter run so cleanly. Laughter from the littered caves above the slime; laughter from the tree-perch safe from walking beasts; laughter challenging the brutes . . .

It did not last. The rain came just after the first whistling surge of wind. The bursting air cleared.

Kaygo trotted easily for shelter, his head lowered against the pelt of ice. He came straight toward the rocks where Melvin lay. There was a clatter somewhere behind Melvin, granite slipping on granite, but he had no time to wonder.

"Kaygo!" he yelled. "Drop it!"

The man threw up his head as he ran and he brought the rifle up, not hesitating.

My brother, Melvin thought. That

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held him one split second longer, with his finger on the trigger and his sights on Kaygo's chest.

Another rifle roared behind him. Kaygo's legs jerked as he tried to keep running. He went down and his hands reached out for the wet stones. That was all.

Jaynes came limping through the rocks. "I hurt my knee, but I got him, rain and all!"

Melvin could not rise for a moment. He felt frozen to the rock.

At last he came up, slowly.

"You were right," Jaynes said. "He took the hard way. After I left you I got to thinking that was what he would do."

They went across the stones to Kaygo. Jaynes turned him over. "Heart. I said I didn't miss running shots, not very often." That was all the interest he had in Marty Kaygo; and now that vanished, too.

Jaynes slipped the pack from the dead man's back. "Steal our chow, would he! Grab your sleeping bag and let's get out of here. Rudd and the others can take care of the chores now. Four for four, Melvin."

"You're counting Strothers?"

"I wish that big-mouth had tried something."

The rain was the coldest that ever fell on Melvin. He unrolled the sleeping bag and covered Kaygo with it, weighting the sides with stones.

Jaynes started to protest, but near the end he helped. "I guess even Kaygo deserves something. He wasn't a bad-looking character at that, was he?"

All this time Melvin had not looked at Jaynes. Now he picked up Jaynes's rifle. Deliberately, Melvin began to smash it against a rock. He splintered the stock and the forestock. He bent the bolt and he battered the 'scope until it was a twisted tube hanging by one mount, and he continued to beat the breech against the rock until the front sight ripped his palm and the impacts numbed his wrists.

He dropped the rifle then and stood breathing hard.

Jaynes had cursed loudly at first, but then he had stopped. The hard glitter was gone from his eyes.

Now, in the voice of a man who lives with splinters in his soul, Jaynes said, "By God, you're going to buy me a new rifle, Melvin. What's the matter with you, anyway?"

Melvin said nothing. Then together they started down the rain-soaked mountain . . .

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SWEET WILLIAM

by DOROTHY SALISBURY DAVIS

IT'S A FINE STORY WE'LL HAVE TO tell, and them meeting us at the boat to hear it." She let the drapes fall into place and turned from the window brushing the dust from her hands. " 'What did you see of New York?' they'll ask. 'A galaxy of lights,' I'll tell them. 'A reflection of the sky under our feet from a dusty window, and four of the dirtiest walls which ever surrounded an actress.' "

"And an actor," he added from the bed. "I'm an actor as well as your husband."

"Wasn't I the stupid girl to accept an arrangement like that?" she said, coming near him.

He looked up at her and lifted an eyebrow. "Accepted? Promoted it, and me the silly gobeen to fall in with the scheme when I could've married the daughter of a jewelry merchant." He sat up and swung his feet to the floor. "Aye, and maybe come to New York on a buying trip — with an expense account."

She sat down beside him on the edge of the bed. "It wouldn't be so bad if we weren't a success, Denny." She picked up the newspaper and read aloud for at least the tenth time: " 'The great Irish Players have invaded Broadway and taken over its heart.' "

"I'd rather a chance at its pocketbook," Denny said. "But the truth of the matter is we read our contracts in Dublin. We've ourselves to thank for the terms we took. So what are we grousing for?"

"I'd no notion of the difference in costs. Did you?"

"Well, I'd some intimation of it. But I put it far back in my mind, I was that eager to see New York."

"I did the same thing," she admitted. "But instead of a feast day, here's our one day off in the week turned into a fast." She plucked a thread from his coat. "Why do you lie down with your coat on, Denny? There's more lint on you than there is on the blanket."

He got up and went through the motions of brushing himself. "If you'd part with that $20 you laid away, Peg, we could own the town tonight."

"What $20? Didn't I pay the rent with it?"

"Was that what you paid it with?"

"They weren't taking a smile on deposit, or a turn of the ankle . . ."

"All right, all right. I'd the notion you hid it, and paid it out of mine. You've done that to me before, you know, Peg — putting away for an emergency. An emergency? Ha! A catastrophe wouldn't pry it from you."

She threw her head back in impatience. "Just answer me this: didn't we owe the twenty out of yours to the stage manager?"

"We did and I intended to still.

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He's relatives living in Bronx, Brooklyn, and Ballyqueens, and us with no more here than my cousin Richard."

"What again was it Richard said when you rang him up, Denny?"

Denny paced the length of the room and back, mimicking Richard's voice: " 'We must go out to our supper together one night while you're here,' he says. 'I've no more than a bachelor apartment and it's no place to be bringing your bride.' "

"By that did he mean him taking us or us taking him out to the supper?"

"From what I remember of Richard, all we'd do is go hungry together. Peg, are you sure about paying back the twenty? I thought . . ."

"Yes, I'm sure. Was I to get a receipt from him?"

"It's only your temper makes me suspicious."

"It's the short temper goes with the long appetite."

"That settles it." He snatched his hat from the dresser. "I'm going to have a look at Richard and his bachelor apartment. If there's a breath of prosperity about him, I'm going to claim an early inheritance."

"What am I to do while you're gone?"

He tossed his wallet on the bed beside her. "Here. There's 50 cents in it and a St. Christopher's medal. If I'm not back in an hour, eat on the one and pray on the other."

"Don't do anything desperate, Denny," she called as he reached the door. "And give me a kiss to sustain me."

"It's me that'll need sustaining. Amn't I leaving you the 50 cents?" But he gathered her into his arms.

"We'll both have nourishment from that," she whispered after the kiss. "And Denny, remember, our troubles are no more than'll be behind us when this day is over."

"Or ahead of us till we get on the boat again."

A few minutes later he was halfway across town, shortening the distance between the West Fifties and the East Fifties in long determined strides. It was warmer outdoors than it was in the hotel, which was the way of a late October afternoon, he thought. To staple his courage at its peak he recalled his own boyhood and his cousin Richard's. They were of an age, and the one woman raised them both, Denny's mother, for Richard's passed away when he was an infant. He reminded himself of the shoes that were bought for Richard when he got a pair, and the chop that was slivered in two when there was but one on the table. That was no more than fair in a charitable house, he thought. But Richard's behavior in manhood was small thanks for it. He shipped on the first boat he could for America, and thereafter sent word but no evidence of his success, while Denny divided his actor's pittance between the old lady and his own dreams.

His small confidence in Richard rose when he reached the block

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of the address. It fell again when he saw the side of the street Richard lived on. He climbed the steps of the dilapidated brownstone and watched an overdressed and overweight woman come from the rear of the hall in answer to his ring. It wasn't a bachelor apartment that one ran, he thought.

"Is Mr. Tully at home, madame?" he asked. "Mr. Richard Tully."

She let the door swing open, presumably for him to enter, and went to the stairs. "Dick?" she called out like a harbor whistle. "Dicky Boy!"

There was no answer from the dim passageway above, only a board creaking in a building that might have trembled with the trot of a mouse across the floor.

"It's no sign he's not there, not answering me," she said, turning around on Denny. "What is it you want with him?"

"No more than a civil word," Denny said. "I'm his cousin from Ireland."

She grunted. "Number Eight at the rear." Without waiting to see him up she waddled out of sight, the lamp jingling as she passed the table on which it stood.

Denny climbed the stairs two at a time. In the upstairs hall there was the smell of dust and disinfectant, and only enough light from a wall fixture to be reflected on the tarnished numerals. He knocked at Number Eight, and then called out his cousin's name. His own voice bounced back at him. He thought himself a fool then to expect that any man would stay in a place like this when he could be out of it. Since nothing stirred within or without, he tried the door. It opened as though it recognized him.

The whole feeling of Richard came back to him when he touched the wall switch and saw the room. For all its tacky furnishings it was as neat as a star, and he could hear his mother's pleading with him as he had heard it so often as a boy: "Denny, just look at Richard's room. Couldn't you take a page from his book and gather your things in a piece?"

"To hell with Richard's room," he said aloud and laughed at his childishness. He moved from one piece to the next trying to feel comfortable and thinking about what he should say at that moment if Richard walked in — or anyone else for that matter. There was only one reason to leave a door open: you were expecting someone who hadn't a key. "I'm just leaving," he said, testing the words. "I'm looking for a scrap of paper to leave Richard a note."

With that intention he went to the one table in the room with a drawer in it and drew it open. He found a writing tablet and a stub of pencil. Flipping open the cover of the tablet, he found a note already on the first page, and in the neat round letters Richard had mastered while he was making O's the shape of raisins.

With no other thought save that it

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might reveal the hour of Richard's return, Denny read the note. Indeed, he had read it before he had time for intentions:

Jimmie
Sweet William in the second
Dick

Well, he thought: there's small change in Richard. He had come to America on a horse — a 40-to-1 shot in the Grand National, and without so much as paying back the pound he had borrowed to put on her nose.

He was about to tear a back sheet from the tablet when something fluttered from between the pages. Fascinated, he watched it waft to the floor: a $20 bill.

In an instant he blessed temptation and pocketed the money. He grabbed the pencil and scribbled:

Dear Richard
I'll be home ahead of Sweet William. But don't wait up for me or the twenty.
Your cousin,
Poor Dennis

He reached the street without sight or protest of the landlady. Striding across Manhattan again he began to think of how he would explain to Peg. She did not know Richard, and was therefore entitled to her qualms. Altogether, he decided, his best chance would be if she had not tempered her hunger. He had not been gone the hour yet.

When he reached Eighth Avenue and turned down it toward the hotel, he found himself heading straight into a man who seemed to have no more power to avoid their colliding than he did. They dodged and swayed as though one was the mirror to the other until they were noses apart. Even their recognition of each other was simultaneous.

"Dennis!"

"Richard!"

"How the hell are you?" cried Richard.

"Were you visiting us?" Denny asked, thinking of more than his health.

"I stopped by for a minute's palaver with your lovely lady." He nudged Denny with his elbow. "Ah, laddie, you must've plucked her from the very top of the tree." Denny began to think of the fun it would be to treat Richard on his own $20. Before he got the invitation out, however, his cousin added: "Well, I must be off till the next time. I'm in a terrible rush to see a man on a transaction."

You'll be in a greater rush after seeing him, Denny thought, but he said: "You'll be getting in touch with us, Richard."

"Oh, I will that. Or you with me, Dennis. Good day to you. And welcome to New York."

Denny watched him hurry out of sight and then quickened his own pace. New York was half the size of Dublin, he thought, for all its population. He tipped his hat to an old lady selling flowers at the hotel

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entry and gathered his thoughts again to the persuasion of Peg on the twenty. He was halfway through the lobby when it occurred to him that she would be easier persuaded if the money were not in one piece, and a flower for her hair would ease the introduction. He turned around and started back to the door. But the old flower woman was not likely to have that much change. He swung across the lobby to the cigar stand and asked the clerk to break down a $20 note for him.

The clerk snickered. "It's a bill," he said. "In this country, my friend, you call it a $20 bill."

"Bill," Denny mused aloud, fondling the crisp money for an instant. "Sweet William."

Before the clerk took the money from his hand, Denny felt a hard clap on his shoulder.

"Come into the manager's office, buddy."

He stuck the money in his pocket and swung around on the man who had spoken.

"Come quiet unless you want to be carted," he added flatly.

Looking up at him, Denny realized his muscles were as thick as his brogue and he had never heard one thicker in Ireland. He did as he was told. In the small office, he was almost in a chair when the big man yanked him up again.

"Let's have your identification."

"Let's have yours," Denny said, trying for boldness.

"I'm the house detective," the big one roared glaring at him angrily.

Denny shook himself free. "What the hell is this all about? I'm with the Irish Players here on a visit."

"Isn't that lovely. You're an actor, are you?"

"I am."

"Then let's see you act. Gimme your wallet."

"It's upstairs with my wife. Keep your fist out of my pocket."

"I'll put it down your throat in a minute. You're a fine credit to Ireland." He pulled the bill from Denny's pocket.

"That's mine," Denny cried.

"Is it now? All that money on an actor." He picked up the phone on the desk. "Gimme the woman who

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put in the complaint." He looked Denny over with contempt. "They're raising the fine ones over there now, for all they're learning them Gaelic."

Denny stared at the $20 as the detective pressed it smooth on the desk. "Madame," he said into the phone, "I've got him and your $20."

Denny's heart leaped at the sound of her voice. Even from where he sat he could hear the fine, crooning lilt of it: "That was wonderful quick, officer. Just take the twenty off him for me and let him go."

Peg called into the phone as though she were trying for an echo across the hills. The detective had to hold the instrument at near arm's length. But he brought it up quick to say: "It isn't that easy, ma'am. You'll have to identify him. Come down now to the office."

"Will it take long?" Peg crooned. "My husband'll soon be home, and I'd as soon he didn't know. It's his family, you know."

So, Denny thought, Richard had more with Peg than palaver.

The detective was as soft as butter with her. "There's a rogue in my wife's family, too," he purred, "but I never cast it up to her though it was me turned him in." He hung up the phone and glowered at Denny. "A nice little girl like that. You're the fine bucko."

Denny sat very still and thought about it all until Peg arrived. She looked from one to the other of the men, speechless.

"Well?" the detective demanded.

"That's my husband," she burst out.

For only a second did the detective waver. He fitted the tips of his fingers together as he added one thing to another. His face lengthened in sympathy. "You can thank your stars you found him out before you had a string of childer' to worry about."

"You don't understand," Peg said.

The detective threw his arms in the air. "Didn't you tell me he threatened you? Didn't you say he promised to stand up in the Crown Theatre and proclaim you a wanton woman if you didn't cough up?"

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"Yes, but . . ."

"And didn't you say he was mad to match a twenty he'd lost on a horse?"

"That was his cousin Richard said that," Peg cried.

Denny grinned, having the gist of it. Sweet William had run and lost early, but whoever was collecting from Richard was late on his rounds.

The detective smashed his fist down on the desk. "But this is the one I caught placing the bet! Right out there." He waved his hand toward the lobby. " 'Sweet William,' he says, holding out the twenty and I nabbed him."

"Hold on a minute," Denny shouted. "Sweet William ran in the second race. What would I be doing betting on a horse already in the pasture?"

"There! That's what I'm trying to tell you," the detective triumphantly cried. "They were in it together!"

"Oh," Peg said, after a second, a look of great understanding lighting her face. "They were in it together, were they? What mischief, the two of them."

What mischief indeed, Denny thought. "I was not placing a bet," he said with great deliberateness. "I wouldn't know a bookmaker from a cobbler in this country. I was getting change of the twenty."

"And where, love, did you get the twenty?" said Peg.

As though she could be persuaded now. "I shook it out of Richard."

"After he shook down your wife for it," the detective put in harshly.

"She was a hell of a lot more shakeable for him than ever she was for me then," Denny shouted. He turned on the big man and faced up to him. "Since you're so set on patching us up, let me ask you a question: who carries the purse in your house?"

The detective's mouth fell open. "My wife Norah does," he said in no more than a whisper.

"And I suppose your pockets are bulging?"

The detective smiled wanly. "The sad truth is, she's so tight she could squeeze a ha'penny out of a mouse."

Peg reached for the money, but Denny clamped his hand over it first. "I've earned this twice," he said. "I want to spend it before I've got to go out and earn it over again."

Peg threw her head back. "I suppose we're treating Richard on it, too, since he was such a help to you getting it out of me?"

"No," Denny said, "but you might say we're treating each other."

"That was a mean prank," Peg said. "I'd never've suspected you of conspiring like that, Denny."

"Nor did I think you'd tell me the story you did, love, of paying the rent with it."

" 'Twas just for today, dear, to save the money. Tomorrow I'd have told you the truth."

"Then tomorrow I'll tell it to you," said Denny. "Tonight we'll celebrate the conspiracy."

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Sinclair Lewis, author of MAIN STREET, BABBITT, *and* ARROWSMITH, *was the first American to be awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. He was also the "stormy petrel" who, in the opinion of 65 literary editors and book reviewers polled a few years ago by the University of Florida Libraries, "made the greatest contribution to American literature in the first half of the Twentieth Century." With a remarkable gift for native speech and epigrammatic catchwords, Sinclair Lewis, in his best work, has enriched the vocabulary of "the American language" as only an enthusiast and specialist like H. L. Mencken could fully appreciate.*

Perhaps you saw Sinclair Lewis's "The Ghost Patrol" as it was dramatized for television. If you did, don't let that prevent you from reading the story as Sinclair Lewis first wrote it. Any similarity between the original story and the television version, in the case of "The Ghost Patrol," was purely coincidental, believe us!

THE GHOST PATROL

by SINCLAIR LEWIS

DONALD PATRICK DORGAN HAD served 44 years on the police force of Northernapolis, and during all but five of that time he had patrolled the Forest Park section.

Don Dorgan might have been a sergeant, or even a captain, but it had early been seen at headquarters that he was a crank about Forest Park. For hither he had brought his young wife, and here he had built their shack; here his wife had died, and here she was buried. It was so great a relief in the whirl of department politics to have a man who was contented with his job that the Big Fellows were glad of Dorgan, and kept him there where he wanted to be, year after year, patrolling Forest Park.

For Don Pat Dorgan had the immense gift of loving people, all people. In a day before anyone in Northernapolis had heard of scientific criminology, Dorgan believed that the duty of a policeman with clean gloves and a clean heart was to keep people from needing to be arrested. He argued with drunken men and persuaded them to hide out in an alley and sleep off the drunk. When he did arrest them it was because they were sedately staggering home intent on beating up the wives of their bosoms. Any homeless man could get a nickel from Dorgan and

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a road-map of the doss-houses. To big bruisers he spoke slowly, and he beat them with his nightstick where it would hurt the most but injure the least. Along his beat, small boys might play baseball, provided they did not break windows or get themselves in front of motor cars. The pocket in his coattail was a mine; here were secreted not only his midnight sandwiches, his revolver and handcuffs and a comic supplement, but also a bag of striped candy and a red rubber ball.

When the Widow Maclester's son took to the booze, it was Don Dorgan who made him enlist in the navy. Such things were Don's work — his art. Joy of his art he had when Kitty Silva repented and became clean-living; when Micky Connors, whom Dorgan had known ever since Micky was a squawking orphan, became a doctor, with a large glass sign lettered J. J. Connors, M.D., and a nurse to let a poor man in to see the great Doctor Connors!

Dorgan did have for one boy and girl a sneaking fondness that transcended the kindliness he felt toward the others. They were Polo Magenta, son of the Italian-English-Danish jockey who had died of the coke, and Effie Kugler, daughter of that Jewish delicatessen man who knew more of the Talmud than any man in the Ghetto — Effie the pretty and plump, black-haired and quick-eyed, a perfect armful for anyone.

Polo Magenta had the stuff of a man in him. The boy worshipped motors as his father had worshipped horses. At fourteen, when his father died, he was washer at McManus' Garage; at eighteen he was one of the smoothest taxi-drivers in the city. At nineteen, dropping into Kugler's Delicatessen for sausages and crackers for his midnight lunch, he was waited upon by Effie.

Thereafter he hung about the little shop nightly, till old Kugler frowned upon them — upon Polo, the gallantest lad in Little Hell, supple in his chauffeur's uniform, straight-backed as the English sergeant who had been his grandfather, pale-haired like a Dane, altogether a soldierly figure, whispering across the counter to blushing Effie.

Kugler lurked at the door and prevented Polo from driving past and picking her up. So Effie became pale with longing to see her boy; Polo took to straight Bourbon, which is not good for a taxi driver racing to catch trains. He had an accident, once; he merely smashed the fenders of another car; but one more of the like, and the taxi-company would let him out.

Then Patrolman Don Dorgan sat in on the game. He decided that Polo Magenta should marry Effie. He told Polo that he would bear a message from him to the girl, and while he was meticulously selecting a cut of sausage for sandwich, he whispered to her that Polo was waiting, with his car, in the alley off Minnis Place. Aloud he bawled: "Come walk the block with me,

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Effie, you little divvle, if your father will let you. Mr. Kugler, it isn't often that Don Dorgan invites the ladies to go a-walking with him, but it's spring, and you know how it is with us wicked cops. The girl looks as if she needed a breath of fresh air."

"That's r-r-r-right," said Kugler. "You go valk a block with Mr. Dorgan, Effie, and mind you come r-r-r-right back."

Dorgan stood like a lion at the mouth of the alley where, beside his taxi, Polo Magenta was waiting. As he caught the cry with which Effie came to her lover, he remembered the evenings long gone when he and his own sweetheart had met in the maple lane that was now the scrofulous Minnis Place.

"Oh, Polo, I've just felt dead, never seeing you nowhere."

"Gee, it hurts, kid, to get up in the morning and have everything empty, knowing I won't see you any time. I could run the machine off the Boulevard and end everything, my heart's so cold without you."

"Oh, is it, Polo, is it really?"

"Say, we only got a couple minutes. I've got a look in on a partnership in a repair shop in Thornwood Addition. If I can swing it, we can beat it and get hitched, and when your old man sees I'm prospering——"

While Dorgan heard Polo's voice grow crisp with practical hopes, he bristled and felt sick. For Kugler was coming along Minnis Place, peering ahead, hunched with suspicion. Dorgan dared not turn to warn them.

Dorgan smiled. "Evening again," he said. "It was a fine walk I had with Effie. Is she got back yet?"

He was standing between Kugler and the alley-mouth, his arms akimbo.

Kugler ducked under his arm, and saw Effie cuddled beside her lover, the two of them sitting on the running-board of Polo's machine.

"Effie, you will come home now," said the old man. There was terrible wrath in the quietness of his graybeard voice.

The lovers looked shamed and frightened.

Dorgan swaggered up toward the group. "Look here, Mr. Kugler: Polo's a fine upstanding lad. He ain't got no bad habits — to speak of. He's promised me he'll lay off the booze. He'll make a fine man for Effie——"

"Mr. Dorgan, years I have respected you, but — Effie, you come home now," said Kugler.

"Oh, what will I do, Mr. Dorgan?" wailed Effie. "Should I do like Papa wants I should, or should I go off with Polo?"

Dorgan respected the divine rights of love, but also he had an old-fashioned respect for the rights of parents with their offspring.

"I guess maybe you better go with your papa, Effie. I'll talk to him——"

"Yes, you'll talk, and everybody will talk, and I'll be dead," cried young Polo. "Get out of my way, all of you."

Already he was in the driver's seat and backing his machine out. It went rocking round the corner.

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Dorgan heard that Polo had been discharged by the taxi-company for speeding through traffic and smashing the tail-lights of another machine; then that he had got a position as private chauffeur in the suburbs, been discharged for impudence, got another position and been arrested for joy-riding with a bunch of young toughs from Little Hell. He was to be tried on the charge of stealing his employer's machine.

Dorgan brushed his citizen's clothes, got an expensive haircut and shampoo and went to call on the employer, who refused to listen to maundering defenses of the boy.

Dorgan called on Polo in his cell.

"It's all right," Polo said. "I'm glad I was pinched. I needed something to stop me, hard. I was going nutty, and if somebody hadn't slammed on the emergency, I don't know what I would have done. Now I've sat here reading and thinking, and I'm right again. I always gotta do things hard, booze or be good. And now I'm going to think hard, and I ain't sorry to have the chanct to be quiet."

Dorgan brought away a small note in which, with much misspelling and tenderness, Polo sent to Effie his oath of deathless love. To the delivery of this note Dorgan devoted one bribery and one shocking burglarious entrance.

Polo was sentenced to three years in prison, on a charge of grand larceny.

That evening Dorgan climbed, panting, to the cathedral, and for an hour he knelt with his lips moving, his spine cold, as he pictured young Polo shamed and crushed in prison, and as he discovered himself hating the law that he served.

One month later Dorgan reached the age-limit, and was automatically retired from the Force, on pension. He protested; but the retirement rule was inviolable.

Dorgan went to petition the commissioner himself. It was the first time in five years, except on the occasions of the annual police parades, that he had gone near headquarters, and he was given a triumphal reception. Inspectors and captains, reporters and aldermen, and the commissioner himself, shook his hand, congratulated him on his 45 years of clean service. But to his plea they did not listen. It was impossible to find a place for him. They heartily told him to rest, because he had earned it.

Dorgan nagged them. He came to headquarters again and again, till he became a bore, and the commissioner refused to see him. Dorgan was not a fool. He went shamefacedly back to his shack, and there he remained.

For two years he huddled by the fire and slowly became melancholy mad — gray-faced, gray-haired, a gray ghost of himself.

From time to time, during his two years of hermitage, Dorgan came out to visit his old neighbors. They

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welcomed him, gave him drinks and news, but they did not ask his advice. So he had become a living ghost before two years had gone by, and he talked to himself, aloud.

During these two years the police force was metropolitanized. There were a smart new commissioner and smart new inspectors and a smart new uniform — a blue military uniform with flat cap and puttees and shaped coats. After his first view of that uniform, at the police parade, Dorgan went home and took down from behind the sheet-iron stove a photograph of ten years before — the Force of that day, proudly posed on the granite steps of the city hall. They had seemed efficient and impressive then, but — his honest soul confessed it — they were like rural constables beside the crack corps of today.

Presently he took out from the redwood chest his own uniform, but he could not get himself to put on its shapeless gray coat and trousers, its gray helmet and spotless white gloves. Yet its presence comforted him, proved to him that, improbable though it seemed, the secluded old man had once been an active member of the Force.

With big, clumsy, tender hands he darned a frayed spot at the bottom of the trousers and carefully folded the uniform away. He took out his nightstick and revolver and the sapphire-studded star the Department had given him for saving two lives in the collapse of the Anthony building. He fingered them and longed to be permitted to carry them. . . . All night, in a dream and half-dream and tossing wakefulness, he pictured himself patrolling again, the father of his people.

Next morning he again took his uniform, his nightstick and gun and shield out of the redwood chest, and he hung them in the wardrobe, where they had hung when he was off duty in his days of active service. He whistled cheerfully and muttered: "I'll be seeing to them Tenth Street devils, the rotten gang of them."

Rumors began to come into the newspaper offices of a "ghost-scare" out in the Forest Park section. An old man had looked out of his window at midnight and seen a dead man, in a uniform of years before, standing on nothing at all. A stranger to the city, having come to his apartment-hotel, the Forest Arms, some ten blocks above Little Hell, at about two in the morning, stopped to talk with a strange-looking patrolman whose face he described as a drift of fog about burning, unearthly eyes. The patrolman had courteously told him of the building up of Forest Park, and at parting had saluted, an erect, somewhat touching figure. Later the stranger was surprised to note that the regulation uniform was blue, not gray.

After this there were dozens who saw the "Ghost Patrol," as the *Chronicle* dubbed the apparition; some spoke to him, and importantly reported him to be fat, thin, tall, short,

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old, young, and composed of mist, of shadows, of optical illusions and of ordinary human flesh.

Then a society elopement and a foreign war broke, and Ghost Patrol stories were forgotten.

One evening of early summer the agitated voice of a woman telephoned to headquarters from the best residence section of Forest Park that she had seen a burglar entering the window of the house next door, which was closed for the season. The chief himself took six huskies in his machine, and they roared out to Forest Park and surrounded the house. The owner of the agitated voice stalked out to inform the chief that just after she had telephoned, she had seen another figure crawling into the window after the burglar. She had thought that the second figure had a revolver and a policeman's club.

So the chief and the lieutenant crawled nonchalantly through an unquestionably open window giving on the pantry at the side of the house. Their electric torches showed the dining room to be a wreck — glass scattered and broken, drawers of the buffet on the floor, curtains torn down. They remarked "Some scrap!" and shouted: "Come out here, whoever's in this house. We got it surrounded. Kendall, are you there? Have you pinched the guy?"

There was an unearthly silence, as of someone breathing in terror, a silence more thick and anxious than any mere absence of sound. They tiptoed into the drawing room, where, tied to a davenport, was the celebrated character, Butte Benny.

"My Gawd, Chief," he wailed, "get me outa this. De place is haunted. A bleeding ghost comes and grabs me and ties me up. Gee, honest, Chief, he was a dead man, and he was dressed like a has-been cop, and he didn't say nawthin' at all. I tried to wrastle him, and he got me down; and oh, Chief, he beat me crool, he did, but he was dead as me great-grandad, and you could see de light t'rough him. Let's get outa this — frame me up and I'll sign de confession. Me for a nice, safe cell for keeps!"

"Some amateur cop done this, to keep his hand in. Ghost me eye!" said the chief. But his own flesh felt icy, and he couldn't help looking about for the unknown.

"Let's get out of this, Chief," said Lieutenant Saxon, the bravest man in the strong-arm squad; and with Butte Benny between them they fled through the front door, leaving the pantry window still open! They didn't handcuff Benny. They couldn't have lost him!

Next morning when a captain came to look over the damages in the burglarized house he found the dining room crudely straightened up and the pantry window locked.

When the baby daughter of Simmons, the plumber of Little Hell, was lost, two men distinctly saw a gray-faced figure in an old-time police

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helmet leading the lost girl through unfrequented back alleys. They tried to follow, but the mysterious figure knew the egresses better than they did; and they went to report at the station house. Meantime there was a ring at the Simmons' door, and Simmons found his child on the doormat, crying but safe. In her hand, tight clutched was the white-cotton glove of a policeman.

Simmons gratefully took the glove to the precinct station. It was a regulation service glove; it had been darned with white cotton thread till the original fabric was almost overlaid with short, inexpert stitches; it had been whitened with pipe-clay, and from one slight brown spot it must have been pressed out with a hot iron. Inside it was stamped, in faded rubber stamping: Dorgan, Patrol, 9th Precinct. The chief took the glove to the commissioner, and between these two harsh, abrupt men there was a pitying silence surcharged with respect.

"We'll have to take care of the old man," said the chief at last.

A detective was assigned to the trail of the Ghost Patrol. The detective saw Don Dorgan come out of his shack at three in the morning, stand stretching out his long arms, sniff the late-night dampness, smile as a man will when he starts in on the routine of work that he loves. He was erect; his old uniform was clean-brushed, his linen collar spotless; in his hand he carried one lone glove. He looked to right and left, slipped into an alley, prowled through the darkness, so fleet and soft-stepping that the shadow almost lost him. He stopped at a shutter left open and prodded it shut with his old-time long nightstick. Then he stole back to his shack and went in.

The next day the chief, the commissioner, and a self-appointed committee of inspectors and captains came calling on Don Dorgan at his shack. The old man was a slovenly figure, in open-necked flannel shirt and broken-backed slippers. Yet Dorgan straightened up when they came, and faced them like an old soldier called to duty. The dignitaries sat about awkwardly, while the commissioner tried to explain that the Big Fellows had heard Dorgan was lonely here, and that the department fund was, unofficially, going to send him to Dr. Bristow's Private Asylum for the Aged and Mentally Infirm — which he euphemistically called "Doc Bristow's Home."

"No," said Dorgan, "that's a private booby-hatch. I don't want to go there. Maybe they got swell rooms, but I don't want to be stowed away with a bunch of nuts."

They had to tell him, at last, that he was frightening the neighborhood with his ghostly patrol and warn him that if he did not give it up they would have to put him away some place.

"But I got to patrol!" he said. "My boys and girls here, they need me to look after them. I sit here and I hear voices — voices, I tell you, and they

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order me out on the beat. . . . Stick me in the bughouse. I guess maybe it's better. Say, tell Doc Bristow to not try any shenanigans wit' me, but let me alone, or I'll hand him something; I got a wallop like a probationer yet — I have so, Chief."

The embarrassed committee left Captain Lucetti with him, to close up the old man's shack and take him to the asylum in a taxi. The Captain suggested that the old uniform be left behind.

Dr. Davis Bristow was a conscientious but crotchety man who needed mental easement more than did any of his patients. The chief had put the fear of God into him, and he treated Dorgan with respect at first.

The chief had kind-heartedly arranged that Dorgan was to have a "rest," that he should be given no work about the farm; and all day long Dorgan had nothing to do but pretend to read, and worry about his children.

Two men had been assigned to the beat, in succession, since his time; and the second man, though he was a good officer, came from among the respectable and did not understand the surly wistfulness of Little Hell. Dorgan was sure that the man wasn't watching to lure Matty Carlson, from her periodical desire to run away from her decent, patient husband.

So one night, distraught, Dorgan lowered himself from his window and ran, skulking, stumbling, muttering across the outskirts and around to Little Hell. He didn't have his old instinct for concealing his secret patrolling. A policeman saw him, in citizen's clothes, swaying down his old beat, trying doors, humming to himself. And when they put him in the ambulance and drove him back to the asylum, he wept and begged to be allowed to return to duty.

Dr. Bristow telephoned to the chief of police, demanding permission to put Dorgan to work, and set him at gardening.

This was very well indeed. For through the rest of that summer, in the widespread gardens, and half the winter, in the greenhouses, Dorgan dug and sweated and learned the names of flowers. But early in January he began to worry once more. He told the super that he had figured out that, with good behavior, Polo Magenta would be out of the pen now, and needed looking after. "Yes, yes — well, I'm busy; sometime you tell me all about it," Dr. Bristow jabbered, "but just this minute I'm very busy."

One day in mid-January Dorgan prowled uneasily all day long — the more uneasy as a blizzard blew up and the world was shut off by a curtain of weaving snow. He went up to his room early in the evening. A nurse came to take away his shoes and overcoat, and cheerily bid him go to bed.

But once he was alone he deliberately tore a cotton blanket to strips and wound the strips about his thin slippers. He wadded newspapers and a sheet between his vest and his shirt. He found his thickest gardening cap.

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He quietly raised the window. He knocked out the light wooden bars with his big fist. He put his feet over the windowsill and dropped into the storm, and set out across the lawn. With his gaunt form huddled, his hands rammed into his coat pockets, his large feet moving slowly, certainly, in their moccasinlike covering of cloth and thin slippers, he plowed through to the street and down toward Little Hell.

Don Dorgan knew that the blizzard would keep him from being traced by the asylum authorities for a day or two, but he also knew that he could be overpowered by it. He turned into a series of alleys, and found a stable with a snowbound delivery wagon beside it. He brought hay from the stable, covered himself with it in the wagon, and promptly went to sleep. When he awoke the next afternoon the blizzard had ceased and he went on.

He came to the outskirts of Little Hell. Sneaking through alleys, he entered the back of McManus' red-light-district garage.

McManus, the boss, was getting his machines out into the last gasps of the storm, for the street-car service was still tied up, and motors were at a premium. He saw Dorgan and yelled: "Hello there, Don. Where did you blow in from? Ain't seen you these six months. T'ought you was living soft at some old-folks' home or other."

"No," said Dorgan, with a gravity which forbade trifling, "I'm a — I'm a kind of watchman. Say, what's this I hear, young Magenta is out of the pen?"

"Yes, the young whelp. I always said he was no good, when he used to work here, and ——"

"What's become of him?"

"He had the nerve to come here when he got out, looking for a job; suppose he wanted the chanct to smash up a few of my machines too! I hear he's got a job wiping, at the K. N. roundhouse. Pretty rough joint, but good enough for the likes o' him. Say, Don, things is slow since you went, what with these dirty agitators campaigning for prohibition ——"

"Well," said Dorgan, "I must be moseying along, John."

Three men of hurried manner and rough natures threw Dorgan out of three various entrances to the roundhouse, but he sneaked in on the tender of a locomotive and saw Polo Magenta at work, wiping brass — or a wraith of Polo Magenta. He was thin, his eyes large and passionate. He took one look at Dorgan, and leaped to meet him.

"Dad — thunder — you old son of a gun."

"Sure! Well, boy, how's it coming?"

"Rotten."

"Well?"

"Oh, the old stuff. Keepin' the wanderin' boy tonight wanderin'. The warden gives me good advice, and I thinks I've paid for bein' a fool kid, and I pikes back to Little Hell with two bucks and lots of good intentions and — they seen me coming. The

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crooks was the only ones that welcomed me. McManus offered me a job, plain and fancy driving for guns. I turned it down and looks for decent work, which it didn't look for me none. There's a new cop on your old beat. Helpin' Hand Henry, he is. He gets me up and tells me the surprisin' news that I'm a desprit young jailbird, and he's onto me — see; and if I chokes any old women or beats up any babes in arms, he'll be there with the nippers — see! so I better quit my career of murder.

"I gets a job over in Milldale, driving a motor-truck, and he tips 'em off I'm a forger and an arson and I dunno what all, and they lets me out — wit' some more good advice. Same wit' other jobs."

"Effie?"

"Ain't seen her yet. But say, Dad, I got a letter from her that's the real stuff — says she'll stick by me till her dad croaks, and then come to me if it's through fire. I got it here — it keeps me from going nutty. And a picture postcard of her. You see, I planned to nip in and see her before her old man knew I was out of the hoosegow, but this cop I was tellin' you about wises up Kugler, and he sits on the doorstep with the Revolutionary musket loaded up with horseshoes and cobblestones, and so — get me? But I gets a letter through to her by one of the boys."

"Well, what are you going to do?"

"Search me. . . . There ain't nobody to put us guys next, since you got off the beat, Dad."

"I ain't off it! Will you do what I tell you to?"

"Sure."

"Then listen: You got to start in right here in Northernapolis, like you're doing, and build up again. They didn't sentence you to three years but to six — three of 'em here, getting folks to trust you again. It ain't fair, but it is. See? You lasted there because the bars kep' you in. Are you man enough to make your own bars, and to not have 'em wished onto you?"

"Maybe."

"You are! You know how it is in the pen — you can't pick and choose your cell or your work. Then listen: I'm middlin' well off, for a bull — savin's and pension. We'll go partners in a fine little garage, and buck John McManus — he's a crook, and we'll run him out of business. But you got to be prepared to wait, and that's the hardest thing to do. Will you?"

"Yes."

"When you get through here, meet me in that hallway behind Mullins' Casino. So long, boy."

"So long, Dad."

When Polo came to him in the hallway behind Mullins' Casino, Dorgan demanded: "I been thinking; have you seen old Kugler?"

"Ain't dared to lay an eye on him, Dad. Trouble enough without stirrin' up more. Gettin' diplomatic."

"I been thinking. Sometimes the most diplomatic thing a guy can do is to go right to the point and surprise 'em. Come on."

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They came into Kugler's shop, without parley or trembling; and Dorgan's face was impassive, as befits a patrolman, as he thrust open the door and bellowed "Evenin'!" at the horrified old Jewish scholar and the maid.

Don Dorgan laid his hands on the counter and spoke.

"Kugler," said he, "you're going to listen to me, because if you don't, I'll wreck the works. You've spoiled four lives. You've made this boy a criminal, forbidding him a good, fine love, and now you're planning to keep him one. You've kilt Effie the same way — look at the longing in the poor little pigeon's face! You've made me an unhappy old man. You've made yourself, that's meanin' to be good and decent, unhappy by a row with your own flesh and blood. Some said I been off me nut, Kugler, but I know I been out beyont, where they understand everything and forgive everything — and I've learnt that it's harder to be bad than to be good, that you been working harder to make us all unhappy than you could of to make us all happy."

Dorgan's gaunt, shabby bigness seemed to swell and fill the shop; his voice boomed and his eyes glowed with a will unassailable.

The tyrant Kugler was wordless, and he listened with respect as Dorgan went on, more gently:

"You're a godly man among the sinners, but that's made you think you must always be right. Are you willing to kill us all just to prove you can't never be wrong? Man, man, that's a fiendish thing to do. And oh, how much easier it would be to give way, onct, and let this poor cold boy creep home to the warmness that he do be longing so for, with the blizzard bitter around him, and every man's hand ag'in' him. *Look — look* at them poor, good children!"

Kugler looked, and he beheld Polo and Effie — still separated by the chill marble counter — with their hands clasped across it, their eyes met in utter frankness.

"Vell ——" said Kugler wistfully.

"So!" said Patrolman Dorgan. "Well, I must be back on me beat — at the asylum . . . There's things that'd bear watching there!"

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PRIZE-WINNER IN LAST YEAR'S CONTEST

PURSUED

by FLETCHER FLORA

IN THE LITTLE RESTAURANT, THE woman sat down with her back to the wall and laid her purse carefully on the table in front of her. The Greek proprietor slipped off his stool behind the counter and moved toward her. His fat hips carried on an autonomous activity of their own, quite unnecessary from that required for the propelling of his body from one place to another. She was sharply conscious of his presence. His oily body gave off a subtle masculine odor that she found not unpleasant, and the thin red line of her lips drew tighter across her teeth.

"A cheese sandwich, please," she said. "Black coffee."

The Greek turned and moved toward the rear of the counter. The woman's eyes followed briefly the independent hips and then dropped in grim concentration to the purse that lay before her. For a moment she imagined that she could detect the outline of the small gun inside.

When the sandwich and coffee were placed on the table, she pushed the sandwich aside and leaned a little forward, letting the steam from the coffee drift upward into her nostrils. She was sitting thus a minute later when the man came in. The blood pumped furiously through her veins, throbbing painfully in her throat, and her startled eyes noted that he seemed thinner now, dressed, with a fastidiousness she did not remember in him, in a dark blue pin-stripe suit. He sat at the counter and ordered coffee, not even glancing at the table where she sat. She felt as a tangible thing, however, the thin thread of awareness that became taut between them.

Beyond the front window a bus pulled up at the curb and stood waiting behind its yellow eyes. Impulsively, the woman pushed back from the table and moved rapidly, with a sharp clicking of high heels, toward the front door. As she moved, she dug into her purse, beneath the gun, until her fingers found a limp bill. She dropped the bill on the counter beside the cash register and went out to the curb and into the bus.

Sitting tensely, she listened without looking for the sound of another passenger getting into the bus through the front door. When the sound did not come, she at last looked up and across the sidewalk into the restaurant to see the man in the pin-stripe still sitting at the counter over his coffee. She relaxed with a small expulsion of breath as the bus rolled away.

A dozen blocks downtown, she got

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off the bus on a corner near a district of movie theaters. She began walking toward the flashing marquees, thinking that it was rather late for a movie but that a movie would be, perhaps, the safest place to go.

She didn't really see the man again. She merely felt him. She had developed a sort of sixth sense regarding him, a sensitivity to his presence that functioned somewhat like an immaterial antenna. She was, indeed, so used to his sudden presence that she wasn't even surprised to feel him there in the recessed doorway of the dark shop as she passed. She had no idea how he had reached the place so quickly from the restaurant, nor how he had known that she herself would come here.

She quickened her pace, her breath hot in her throat. At the box office of the nearest movie she pushed coins through the small opening in the glass and said, "One, please." The girl inside touched a button that shot a ticket out of a slot. A few cents in change rattled down a metal slide into a receptacle. With trembling fingers she picked up the ticket and the change and went on into the theater.

Afterward, she could not have told why she chose the seat with an empty seat beside it. It was a foolish thing to do — a very foolish thing. When the man sat down in it, she went suddenly rigid and was too terrified to move or to make a sound. She became aware of the odors of soap and smoke and something else too subtle to be identified, and these were followed by a violent wave of the heinous emotion that kept her fear company. She was seized by a spasm of trembling. Her voice whispered hoarse and bitter in her throat.

"Leave me alone! Leave me alone!"

The man turned, twisting in his seat. She was conscious of the malignancy of his eyes in the semi-darkness.

"You say something, sister?"

By an effort of will that exceeded any she had ever exercised, she turned and looked him full in the face.

"Leave me alone!" she whispered again, and getting up, she pushed her way, hurrying and stumbling over feet, down the long row to the far side of the section.

A dim red exit light attracted her attention, and she went out beneath it. Pushing open an outer door of heavy metal, she found herself between the theater and its neighboring building in a narrow service alley that was just wide enough to permit her passage. She went down it to the wider rear alley and out to the side street.

A taxi passed, and she waved frantically without attracting the driver's attention. Her eyes, following the progress of the taxi, were arrested by another bus idling at the corner of the street on which the theater faced. Hurrying, she slipped between the doors just before they closed with a soft pneumatic whisper.

The bus moved out of the bright lights, away from the flaring, colored tubes and bulbs, and into narrow streets where people could walk un-

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observed in shadows near the brick of old buildings. The weak yellow light of street lamps, spaced far apart, was beaten back by the night.

In her bus seat she had gone tense again, feeling the inescapable presence of the man. Behind her. The thought flashed into her mind that he simply must have walked out the front exit of the theater to board the bus ahead of her. But how had he known that she would follow him into the bus? She hadn't known. There never was any knowing in advance. . . . Long ago she had given up trying to understand the secret of his fantastic foresight.

She sat in the bus a long time, the enveloping sense of his presence holding her transfixed, until at last she became aware that the bus had stopped in yellow light to unload a passenger. Suddenly she moved, up and forward with a violent wrenching motion, as if she were pulling up roots, and a few seconds later she was walking rapidly down the street. As she walked, she could feel him still behind her, and so she began to run, her heels making sounds like the firing of an automatic gun.

She had almost reached the next lamp when a uniformed policeman moved out of the darkness of the side street into the yellow glow. The noise of her heels had brought him, and he stood there expectant, bent slightly forward, peering in her direction. She slowed to a walk, breasts heaving, as the policeman stepped to meet her.

"What's the hurry, Miss? Something wrong?"

She fought for breath and words, suddenly wondering what would happen if he looked into her purse and found the gun.

"I'm being followed," she gasped. "A man."

The policeman looked up the street with quick belligerence.

"Yeah? Where is the guy?"

She turned to look — but of course he was no longer there. He had vanished as soon as the policeman appeared. And how can one explain to a strange policeman a pursuer with the marvelous aptitudes of a devil? Not knowing how, she was silent, watching the policeman's belligerence change slowly to suspicion.

"I don't see any man, Miss."

"He's gone," she said simply, not even hoping that he would understand.

The policeman indulged in a vast shrug and peered more closely into her face.

"Look, Miss, you don't look like the type who'd be prowling this beat at night. You going somewhere? Somewhere I can take you?"

"No. No, thank you."

"Okay. But get wherever you're going. Get off these streets. Next time there might really be a man. And maybe no cop."

"Yes," she said, "yes," and thanked him again.

She crossed a yellow intersection and went a block to the next corner. Hesitating, she thought she heard

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ahead of her the soft lapping of a river at its banks. Turning to her right, she went up a narrow street terrifying in its darkness and had gone the full length before she discovered that it was dead-end. Before her was the crumbling brick wall of an old building. Starting to retrace her steps, she stopped short again, feeling terror like pain in her breast, knowing that the man would appear at the open end of the street before she could reach it — knowing that she was trapped at last.

While she stood there frozen, a pale rectangle of light appeared in the black bulk of the building flanking the street on her right. The man stood framed in the light, preparing to step down into the street. Six feet — no more — lay between them. Conflicting emotions were a riot in her breast at this added evidence of his cleverness. He must have realized that she would expect him to appear at the far end of the street. Perhaps he had feared that she might find escape through an unlocked door into one of the dark buildings. So he had managed — somehow — to come through the building to the side door. And now there was no way to escape him — no way at all.

Her breath forced its way through stiff lips in shrill, labored bursts, and the gun was heavy in her hand.

The man, hearing her breathe, leaned forward to stare into the darkness.

"Who is it?" he asked.

When she didn't answer, he stepped down into the street and took two steps toward her. Just two. Her finger worked spastically at the trigger of the gun until there was no sound left between the old buildings but her own shrill screams and the heavy pounding of the cop's feet as he spun into the dead-end street and beat toward her, gun drawn.

She was never able to recapture the details of her transit from the dead-end street to the little room at police headquarters. She did remember, however, her vast relief in finding that all the vague stories she had heard for so long were, after all, untrue. There was no brutality. There was no terrifying isolation in a circle of white, blinding light. There was just the little room with two or three men who spoke to her so quietly that she found it surprisingly easy to tell the whole story from the beginning.

The man who asked most of the questions was tall and incredibly thin, with a big bald dome and a long face that was the unhealthy color of old tallow and hung loosely in folds from its bone structure. His eyes were inclined to hide shyly behind their lids and his voice was gentle.

When she had finished speaking and sat waiting in her straight chair with her hands folded primly in her lap, the thin man stirred and lifted his eyes to her face. He smiled a little, reassuringly.

"How long did you say this man has been following you?"

"Two months. Perhaps three."

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"And tonight he followed you into the dead-end street and you killed him."

"He came through the building."

"He came through the building and you killed him."

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I've explained that it was the only way. The only way to escape him."

"This man you killed was the same man who'd been following you all night? The same one who'd been following you the past two or three months?"

"Yes."

She shivered.

The thin man's shy eyes dropped from her face to the floor. His voice remained gentle but took on an added quality of weariness.

"Look, lady. That building was a wholesale grocery. The man was one of the partners who owned it. He and his partner had been going over the books. His partner was still inside. He'll swear to it."

The sudden feeling that he was trying to trap her brought terror back, but after a moment she was able to speak reasonably.

"You must understand that it's a trick. He was very clever, you see. He was full of tricks to make things seem different from what they really were."

"I see. Tell me, why did he follow you like that?'

This was the most difficult question of all. She sat very still, eyes downcast, color creeping in a pink wave through the flesh of her face.

"He was in love with me," she whispered. "It was a terrible love. It had death in it. He planned to kill me because I didn't return his love."

He sat folded in his chair, still quiet, eyes still focused in a sightless gaze at the floor. His voice was a monotone, like the voice of one reading colorless data from a record.

"*Emma Marie Boynton, unmarried. Age, 42. Height, 5 feet, 6 inches. Weight, 152 pounds. Hair, gray. . . .*"

His voice was engulfed in a roar of internal thunder that beat at her brain and made her physically ill. She understood that she had been lead by the treachery of kindness beyond the boundary of hope. Even this soft-spoken policeman was party to the conspiracy surrounding her long flight. She felt a desperate compulsion to rise and shriek at him, but she found she could neither move nor make a sound.

He was, for his part, thinking of his own age and the increasing loneliness of his bachelor life. Realizing, with sudden disquietude, the bleak prospect of his approaching retirement. He and the woman sat silently, staring at the floor, looking rather like an elderly couple depressed by their inability to find anything interesting to say to one another. Once his eyes lifted to her bowed head and dropped quickly.

"I see just how it was, lady," he said.

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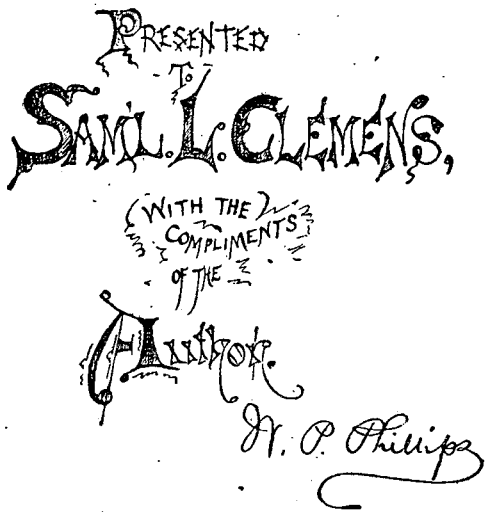
One day the postman delivered a parcel containing a curious volume sent to us by Howard S. Mott, the well-known dealer in rare books. Curious volume, indeed! It was titled, in an old-fashioned way: OAKUM PICKINGS: A COLLECTION OF STORIES, SKETCHES, AND PARAGRAPHS CONTRIBUTED FROM TIME TO TIME TO THE TELEGRAPHIC AND GENERAL PRESS, *by John Oakum, "A Snapper-Up of Unconsidered Trifles." The book was published in New York by W. J. Johnston in 1876.*

Now, of and by itself, the volume had no importance. Mr. Mott, considered an outstanding expert in the field of American books of humor, had never seen or heard of the book before. But this particular copy had a special fascination. It had been inscribed and presented by the author to no less a giant in the field of creative humor than Mark Twain himself. The inscription was so beautifully "engraved," and is so beautifully reminiscent of the Mark Twain times, that we reproduce it for your visual pleasure:



The history of the book, after it had been received by Mark Twain, is easy to trace. Mark Twain helped to establish a public library at Redding, Connecticut — it became known as The Mark Twain Library. The great American writer selected some books from his personal library and presented them to the Redding library. One of those books was the complimentary copy sent to him by "John Oakum" — as evidenced by

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the library rubber-stamp to be found in the book itself. But after the Oakum book was transplanted to the Redding library, no one bothered to read it — even with the beautiful inscription on the flyleaf. So, finally, long after the deaths of the author and of the original recipient, the book was discarded, and through the good offices of Howard S. Mott, it found a haven and a home in the Ellery Queen collection.

For this neglected book, this unwept, unhonored, and unsung book, contains as amusing a tale of murder as we have read in many a moon. We can't help wondering if Mark Twain ever bothered to look his gift-book in the mouth. If he did, he was rewarded. He couldn't possibly have refrained from chuckling at the denouement of "Murder by Extraction" — we'd bet a re-reading of "Tom Sawyer, Detective" on that!

MURDER BY EXTRACTION

by JOHN OAKUM

I HAVE BEEN ON AN EXCURSION to Block Island, and I desire to tell you something about that sea-girt isle. I proceeded from Providence by steamer *Canonicus*, down the beautiful Narragansett Bay. The scenery along the shore is as fine as any in the world, and I enjoyed it hugely. After leaving Newport, the *Canonicus* began to heave badly, as did also most of the passengers. Being an old salt myself, I didn't mind it. There was one other man on board who did not — a melancholy-looking individual whose attire had hardly a shabby-genteel respectability. He seemed to take a good deal of interest in me, and, as he paced up and down the lounge, it became obvious to me that he had been "taking something warm." His breath was decidedly aromatic, as I noticed more particularly when he accosted me:

"Isn't the swell charming? I was once a swell myself, but that was in the remote past, before I committed murder."

This was cheerful, to say the least; this standing face to face with an avowed murderer had something novel in it. I eyed the fellow askance, but he looked supernaturally grave; and I said:

"So you have committed murder? Does the ghost of your victim ever haunt you?"

"No, not now," he answered, "but it did for several years. I am a dentist by profession. After the murder I tried to continue my business, but every afternoon my victim came and

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sat by me. I struggled against his presence; I moved my business from one place to another; but all in vain. Finally, broken down in health, with flagging energies and my reason almost unseated, I sold out my office to a German, and came East. The ghost has never troubled me since."

"Then it was in the West where you perpetrated the crime?"

"Yes, in Silesia, Michigan. Silesia is a small town 50 miles from Detroit, a beautifully situated hamlet nestling among the softly sloping hills of—"

"Oh, let it nestle among the sloping hills," I impatiently broke out. To tell the truth, I don't think poetry and murder should be mixed indiscriminately. If some poetry is murderous, no murder is poetical, and I told him so. He admitted that I was correct, and at my solicitation, he narrated the terrible details of the affair. I give his story verbatim, as he told it to me.

"It was midwinter, 1857. I had not been doing any business for weeks. Every decayed tooth in Silesia had been extracted, every toothless adult who could raise the money to pay for a false set had been supplied. One afternoon, as I sat smoking by the fire and praying inwardly for the advent of spring, which I knew would send me many customers from the farms back in the country, I heard a rap at the door, and cried out cheerily. 'Come in.' A tall, middle-aged man stepped into the room. He proceeded directly to business:

" 'I am from over on the frontier. I've got a rattling bad tooth that has nigh drove me crazy these cold nights, and I want you to pull on it. I don't 'spect you can yank him, for a fellow over in Detroit has tried it and gin it over. But you can stir it up a little, p'raps, and I'll get a little comfort for a while, anyhow.'

"I begged him to be seated, and went to work (continued the murderer), but nothing came of my endeavors. I tried every instrument I had, every trick known to the profession; but the only impression I could make was to lift him from his chair. I felt very bad to let him go off, but he insisted that I had done bravely, paid me $5, and said he would certainly call in the spring if the tooth troubled him again.

"It was the first time I had ever been balked, and I determined to draw his molar if he ever placed himself in my hands again. As soon as he was gone, I went over to Jim Milliken's harness shop and bought twenty feet of trace-leather, and on my way back I stopped into Sam Hancock's hardware store and bought three pounds of screws, 50 feet of rope, and a small derrick block. These I took to my office, and the next day I went to work with them. First I screwed my operating-chair to the floor. Then I arranged my trace-leather into a sort of harness, and procuring buckles from Milliken, I had that perfected in less than three days. Meanwhile, John Pettingill, the blacksmith, happened in, and I told him to make me a strong

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staple for the ceiling. He had it done Saturday night, and having bought a windlass Friday afternoon, I worked diligently all day Sunday putting the pulleys, ropes, etc., in position.

"When this was done I felt prepared for any emergency, and went home. The next week came, and the next, but it did not bring my friend from the frontier. Finally, one day in early March, when I had nearly given him up, he made his appearance. The snow lay thick upon the ground, the heavens were leaden.

"Well," he continued, "the old fellow came in. I inquired if his tooth had ever troubled him since, and he said that it had. He had, in fact, come down to have it stirred up again. I seated him in the chair, harnessed him in, and got a pair of steel pincers that I knew to be reliable, and hooked onto the tusk. Then I let down the rope, on the end of which was a vise — By the by," he said, glancing at a cigar I was smoking, "I have some small vices. Smoking is one of them; give me a weed."

I gave him one, and admonished him that I was impatient for the finale of his narrative. He was several minutes getting lighted up, when he resumed by saying: "I fastened the vise onto the forceps, and took up my position behind him, where the windlass was. I let on about one-horse power, and the only impression it made on him was to lift up his left foot. Every time I put on steam I noticed that his foot came up about ten inches, and when I eased up again it touched the floor. Then I went around and asked him how he felt. He said everything was all right. I again took my place at the windlass, and put on two-horse power. His left foot went up under the chair like a flash, but the molar did not come out. I put on three-horse power, but no result. Four-horse power, ditto. I was frantic, and in my excitement I jumped the machine to its utmost capacity — ten-horse power —and the effect was electrical. I struck on the floor with a heavy thud which stunned me; but, quickly recovering, I rose to my feet and saw the whole at a glance.

"At the end of the rope hung a perfect skeleton, while in the chair, strapped tightly in, was my customer — that is, the meat part of him. He was actually boned, sir. Well, I investigated the skeleton and found that the tooth was connected with the bones of the left leg and foot. My patient was dead; he had passed across the darksome river Styx — gone to that mysterious bourne —"

I checked him here; I could stand no more. A smile crept over my features, but his countenance was as the grave.

"You believe that story," he said.

"Oh, yes," I answered, "it is the most plausible and touching thing I ever heard."

He took my hand in his clammy one and shook it savagely, asked for another cigar, and I have never seen him again.

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EQMM's DETECTIVE DIRECTORY

edited by ROBERT P. MILLS

ROSE'S LAST SUMMER *by MARGARET MILLAR* (RANDOM, $2.50)	"Farcical mystery that has delightful characterization and a uniquely original plot . . ." (DD)	"Mrs. Millar is at her best, perceptive and delicately witty, in a delicious yarn . . ." (AdV)
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THE NINE WRONG ANSWERS *by JOHN DICKSON CARR* (HARPER, $3.00)	". . . basic puzzle . . . good . . . inordinate length . . . pretense at a non-existing 'duel of wits' . . . below Mr. Carr's standard." (AB)	". . . whale of a British story . . . mocking Carr footnotes add to puzzle's challenge." (DBH)
THE BAT THAT FLITS *by NORMAN COLLINS* (DUELL, SLOAN & PEARCE, LITTLE BROWN, $2.75)	". . . fine lot of credible and ambivalent characters . . . biting style . . . fortuitous 'solution' . . ." (AB)	". . . a lively yarn, frequently funny and consistently well written. Different." (AdV)
PRISONER'S BASE *by REX STOUT* (VIKING, $2.50)	". . . solidly gratifying . . . construction tight . . ." (AB)	". . . faultless in all respects, rates tops in drama, plotting, humor . . ." (AdV)
A HOLE IN THE GROUND *by ANDREW GARVE* (HARPER, $2.50)	". . . melodramatic ending . . . readable, often fascinating, and exasperatingly false novel." (AB)	"It's quite impossible to close this book before the end. Superb." (AdV)
SO RICH, SO LOVELY, SO DEAD *by HAROLD Q. MASUR* (SIMON & SCHUSTER, $2.50)	". . . plausible, suspenseful, very fast-paced, and vigorous without getting self-consciously tough . . ." (AB)	". . . this yarn of chicanery and violence in high places quite easy to take." (AdV)
YOU DIE(T) TO-DAY *by BAYNARD KENDRICK* (MORROW, $2.50)	"Another admirable craftsman lets his standards slip somewhat . . ." (AB)	". . . complex . . . but . . . well worth reading. Cheers." (AdV)

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Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine rounds up the judgment of reviewers across the country. The key on the right gives sources.

". . . one of those rare tales that manages to be funny about grue and satisfactorily mysterious too." (JS)	"Plotting rather fancy, but characters are sharply clear, humor abundant . . . Good." (SC)	
". . . careful writing, unusual story, and general atmosphere of doom . . ." (FC)	". . . tense moments; solution strictly orthodox. Plus, on balance." (SC)	*KEY TO REVIEW SOURCES*
". . . solution is surprising . . . theatricalities are strained . . . ingenuities are puckeringly dry." (JS)	". . . snarled confusion, labored in technique . . . surprise ending so incredible it goes flat." (LGO)	AB: *Anthony Boucher in the New York Times* FC: *Frances Crane in her syndicated column* SC: *Sergeant Cuff in The Saturday Review*
"First thriller by 'regular' novelist nice compound of chills and laughs. Good." (SC)	"Background is unusual and good . . . humor holds up all right and the writing is beautifully clear." (LGO)	DD: *Drexel Drake in the Chicago Tribune* DBH: *Dorothy B. Hughes in the Los Angeles Daily News*
". . . a pretty good example of the prestidigitation of Rex Stout . . ." (JS)	"The team's in top form. B plus." (LGO)	LGO: *Lenore Glen Offord in the San Francisco Chronicle*
"Very first-rate suspense in a unique background." (FC)	"Mr. Garve, as usual, struck off in a new direction . . . unusual and exciting story." (LGO)	JS: *James Sandoe in the New York Herald Tribune*
". . . a tale rapid, toe-deep and slippery as soap under foot which you can read with ease." (JS)	"Moves briskly, but trail is cluttered with multiplicity of personnel." (SC)	AdV: *Avis de Voto in the Boston Globe*
"It's all very competently managed." (JS)	"Novel murder device, deeply knotted puzzle . . ." (DD)	

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THE CAVE OF BELARIUS

by MICHAEL INNES

"THIS YEAR'S FÊTE," SAID THE Vicar, "seems to have been even more devastating than usual. There was everything from a grand historical pageant of Sheercliff history down to a jumble sale. The first distracted the school children from their work for a month, and the second has induced my wife to make the most outrageous raid upon my scanty personal possessions and habiliments. Don't you detest the fête?"

Inspector Appleby nodded. "Certainly. I regard it as being distinctly of the kind that is worse than death."

The Vicar considered this seriously. "A pardonable exaggeration," he presently pronounced. "Do you know that the enormously popular merry-go-round — you can see them dismantling it now — turns out to have been operating for purely private profit? Deplorable — quite deplorable. You agree, Professor?"

The Professor looked around him with caution. "I have quite clear views upon such occasions, I must confess. But about yesterday's fête my lips are sealed. Your townsfolk did my wife the honor of asking her to open it."

"And you went along, too?"

"I have to admit that I cut it." The Professor was apologetic. "The afternoon was lovely, and I simply slipped out of our hotel and went for a tramp. For some time I've wanted to see your celebrated cave on the other side of the hill."

"The cave of Belarius?" The Vicar was interested. "You had a look at it?"

"I did." The Professor hesitated. "And — do you know? — I had a look at Belarius, too."

"You mean you took a copy of *Cymbeline* along with you and read the later acts on the spot?"

The Professor shook his head. "No," he said slowly. "I don't mean that. I mean that I had an adventure . . . and rather a queer one. Perhaps you would care to hear the story. It illustrates an interesting mechanism of the mind."

"Appleby and I are all attention." The Vicar smiled. "And whether the mind be indeed a mechanism is something we can talk about later."

"In itself, as you know, the cave isn't terribly exciting," the Professor began. "It starts off as a mere cleft in the rock, becomes an arched chamber of no great size, and then narrows again to a cleft which, by dint of stooping, one can follow for another 50 feet. If Shakespeare's banished lord had really brought up two young men in it they would certainly have been a quarrelsome couple through sheer irritation at their cramped quarters.

"Nevertheless I explored the place

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faithfully enough. Caves are always fascinating. If you are superstitious, you may believe them to be tenanted by the ghosts of your remote ancestors who once inhabited them. If you are a scientist, you know that these ghosts do, at least, still haunt the inside of your own head; they are slumbering there, and special circumstances may at any time prompt them to wake up and walk about. Enter a cave by yourself, therefore, and you have to be pretty strong-minded to remain entirely convinced you are alone. You agree?"

The Vicar nodded. "Certainly. And it was so on this occasion?"

"Not at first. As I explored the place my mind behaved in a thoroughly rational fashion. I wondered how the cave came to be associated with *Cymbeline*, and I recalled what I had read about prehistoric remains found in the district — that sort of thing. Then, upon coming out, I sat down on a boulder in the sun. It's a pleasant spot, with the cave giving upon a broad, grassy platform on the side of the hill. I reflected that here, perhaps, was the source of the association with Shakespeare's play, since the effect is very much that of a stage. The sunshine was delightful, and I felt lazy and relaxed. I certainly had no sense of anything unusual or paranormal as being about to happen."

"Nevertheless it did?" Inspector Appleby was looking with some interest at the Professor.

"Decidedly. I was quite alone. For a few seconds I may have closed my eyes. When I opened them, it was to discover that I had a companion. Standing in the mouth of the cave was a Stone Age man."

"A *Stone Age* man?" The Vicar had sat up abruptly.

"Or, if you prefer it, Shakespeare's Belarius. He is commonly played as a bearded, skin-clad figure, so it comes to much the same thing. He was carrying something on his back — it might have been the buck or hart that is also traditional with Belarius — and, after looking around him for a moment he disappeared into the cave. I was extremely interested. It was a striking instance of the mind's power to produce eidetic imagery."

"To produce *what*?" The Vicar was dismayed. "Do you mean, my dear fellow, that you had experienced a hallucination? And were you not very alarmed?"

"Alarmed?" The Professor smiled comfortably. "Dear me, no. Had I seen *myself* I should have had some cause for uneasiness. The *doppelganger* type of hallucination is rather a bad symptom, but harmless after all.

Appleby was looking thoughtfully at the ground. "And that," he asked prosaically, "was all that happened?"

"Well, no — as a matter of fact, it was not. I sat for some time looking fixedly at the mouth of the cave, determining my pulse-rate, estimating the distance at which the hallucinatory appearance had seemed to stand, and that sort of thing. Reported occurrences of this sort by

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trained scientific observers, you will realize, are uncommon and can be important. Then it struck me that I had better traverse the cave again, and verify its being, in fact, completely empty. I had just reached its mouth when another figure emerged from it quite suddenly. This second figure was flesh and blood — as I happen to know from the very simple fact that he bumped straight into me. And he was, oddly enough, an unmistakable parson in mufti — a rather haggard, clean-shaven fellow in well-worn clerical gray flannel. He made me a civil apology and then walked straight down the hill. I called after him, but he didn't stop. I was disappointed, because an extraordinarily new possibility had struck me."

"A possibility?" Inspector Appleby had suddenly looked up.

"This fellow was certainly agitated. I had remarked that. So what occurred to me was this. Perhaps there had been a small group hallucination — the formation of a joint eidetic image, common to us both, and involving some form of telepathic communication between us."

"You mean" — the Vicar took this in slowly — "that the parson too may have fancied he saw Belarius?"

"Precisely so. And, being no scientist, he was upset about it."

"As I should certainly have been." The Vicar chuckled. "And did you then inspect the cave again?"

"Most certainly. And it was, of course, empty. There are a few cracks in which you could hide a dog or a cat, but there is certainly no lurking-place for a man. That Belarius had no material existence, therefore, we can take to be a certainty. You agree?"

"I'll agree," he said, "if Appleby will agree. Appleby —" He broke off. "Dear me — where *is* Appleby?"

"Perhaps he has been taken ill. But no — how very odd! I think I can hear him using your telephone."

"Belarius," said Inspector Appleby five minutes later, "broke prison across the moor early yesterday morning. At Sheercliff he hung about the fringes of the fête, penetrated into a tent with the costumes for the pageant, and got himself up as an ancient Briton. That gave him a respite, since scores of people were going about in historical costume. He used the opportunity to stalk something which would excite less remark elsewhere, and managed to get away with some of the Vicar's old clothes from the jumble sale. With these in a bundle he made off across the hill, spotted the cave, and slipped into it to change. When he had done so, he thrust the Stone Age dress into a crack, came out, was startled to meet the Professor, and made off as fast as he could."

The Vicar shook his head solemnly. "How very dull the truth can be."

Appleby, staring across the moor beyond the town, nodded. "Quite so. It's no fun hunting down a poor devil of an escaped convict. But it would be rather enchanting to capture an eidetic image."

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DEPARTMENT OF "FIRST STORIES"

We cannot claim discovery of Fred Levon's "Help Me — If You Can." It is a "first" which appeared originally in that fine Canadian magazine, "Maclean's," where the story was called "Turmoil." Had Mr. Levon's tale been submitted to EQMM in manuscript, we would have pounced on it; now we are happy to be the first to reprint it. "Help Me — If You Can" is a remarkable first effort; the story has power, insight, sharp characterization, and a manner of telling that achieves, especially for a beginning writer, a high degree of suspense.

The author is an Armenian by birth who was brought to the United States before he was one year old. He attended grammar and high schools in New York City, then went to Columbia University where he devoted his entire curriculum to scientific and premedical studies. He was graduated from medical school in 1943, and took further training in New York and Boston. It was while he was a research fellow at Harvard Medical School that Mr. Levon wrote his first story. Like another doctor in the London of the 1880s, Mr. Levon found himself with insufficient income and sufficient time; like that other doctor, Mr. Levon used the latter to improve the former, through the medium of writing a detective story. The older doctor almost gave up hope of selling his story, but thank the Lord, "Beeton's Christmas Annual" finally published it. Mr. Levon had better luck in selling his first story: "Maclean's" was the second magazine to see it, and they promptly put it into print.

So, indirectly, we welcome another new writer to EQMM, and invite him, by all means, to continue using his fine talent.

HELP ME — IF YOU CAN

by FRED LEVON

MY REASON FOR RECORDING ALL this is not clear to me, except that in a frantic, hopeless way, I am looking for help. This problem has too long been mine alone, and there is nothing more I can do with it. I have never been as alone as I am now, living from day to night sleepless and defeated, incapable of the smallest decision. My thoughts are overwhelmed

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by despair. Even my anguish is chaotic, molded into an indescribable, patternless horror. My lucid moments are few. Consider this while I have the courage to tell it, and then help me. If you can . . .

I am an only child. I was born by Caesarean section, and my mother died on the table. In my mind she exists only as a sacred institution: the woman who loved my father, married him, bore him a son, and died in so doing. As a child I was always grateful to her for the function she had served, but I never missed her. I had no reason to; my father was enough.

Though I had governesses in early life I have difficulty recalling them, but all my earliest memories include my father. Every incident in my life is a memory of him: his care during my illnesses, his concern over my childhood problems and early schooling, his advice and guidance during my adolescence, his comradeship in sports (which made other playmates unnecessary), his vacations with me, his consideration, protection, kindness, love, generosity. He was always "Harry" to me, and he was ageless. I don't know if I can make you understand what his friendship meant to me, but it was my entire life. Many families exist only because circumstance put them together, and, if left to chance, surely many of them would not remain friends. My father and I were bound by an association completely independent of blood relationship and social obligation. We were perfect companions and confidants, complete friends, a perfect team both socially and at sport. Our personalities were one and our existences were mutually interdependent. It was this relationship that has been destroyed, this loss for which I shall never be able to find compensation. This is the wound which will always remain open and ugly and painful in me, and which will never heal.

Harry — my father — was a successful corporation lawyer with offices in Chicago. Our home is in Burrow, Illinois, which is a pleasant and moderately wealthy residential town — the type without much need for law enforcement. Our house is seven miles from the center of town, and was built several generations ago, when it was possible for a man of good income to have a small lake on an estate and build a boathouse and add a few stables. At one time we had horses, and we rode daily, Harry and I. We had two tennis courts, too, and they are still there — but are now overgrown with weeds. Maggie is still with us, but will probably be leaving soon. Maggie came on with my mother and stayed after I was born. I wonder what she thinks of all this. She doesn't speak much any more.

Perhaps everything would have been different if I had realized as early as Harry did how abnormal our association was. When I became seventeen, and he 39, he began to slow up and encourage me to seek friendship other than his own. He was concerned at first at his loss of pace and joked that I should turn to classmates

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who could equal my distance at hiking or swimming; but I was content to adjust my own speed to his. We were swimming back from the island one day, when he tired and I helped him in.

"I used to make it both ways with you on my back, George," he said. "Pretty soon you'll have to pull me in a boat!" We both laughed at the time, but I think that's when everything started to change. He began to get little pains in his chest after a long game, and it worried him. He would never play for any good length of time.

"No, you go alone," he began to say. "I'll be along later. Call Henry and Jim, and I'll come later." "Sorry, George, I'm just not up to it." "George, I want you to have some girl friends and make some dates. You can have the car any time you want. You're almost eighteen, you know!"

I had some friends, and I tried. I liked them, and enjoyed being with them, and more might have come of it if it hadn't been for Rosine. Harry started bringing her home with him after work; we would all eat together and then they would go out. It was great fun. For them.

I admit I was jealous of Rosine's friendship, and bitter about her monopoly of Harry. I distrusted her, I disliked her. I looked for gossip about her and I found it, and then I hated her.

Of course I was right about her, and Harry was wrong. Look how things turned out; that proves it, doesn't it? But all he could see was that I was spoiled and unreasonable. There was no use arguing. She had him sewed up.

Riding, for instance. The first time we went, she wore silk stockings, and no boots. Where she forgot her tiara, I don't know. She tore the stockings, of course; she got scratched, the saddle hurt, the sun was in her eyes, her hat blew off, and the horse was jumpy. We never went riding again. For swimming, the water was always too cold, or her hair had just been set. Tennis: "Play with George, Harry, and I'll watch. No, of course not, I don't mind!" And there she'd sit, filing her nails, or distracting Harry with questions about the evening's entertainment, or just plain yawning. It was great fun. Like bleeding.

The first time I met her, I didn't know she was Harry's secretary. Gradually I got the whole story — some from Maggie, some from school, some from Dr. Mackett. She was a Chicago girl, and she had married young and gone to New York. She had divorced with a financial settlement, but due to the bankruptcy of her husband, her income was discontinued and she was forced to work. She returned to Chicago, where Harry met her at the office of a client, and subsequently took her over as his own secretary. She liked her new job. After a while she even stopped trying to arrange a new financial settlement with her ex-husband. Rosine is tall and slim and blonde, and always smiling. She has good teeth, and

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blue eyes with very long, dark lashes. I guess Harry was pretty susceptible. At any rate, it didn't take her long to tie him into a knot and to untie me. Her plans were well beyond mine, and although I watched my home and security collapsing about me, I was powerless to prevent it. I guess there are a few things you just can't fight against.

I went away just before they were married. I enrolled in the University and left home a week before the freshman year began, just to miss the wedding. There were words, of course, mostly Harry's and Maggie's. Dr. Mackett was called in and had a few, too. He didn't actually come out and say he thought I was mentally ill, but he left little doubt that he thought Freud was busy somewhere around.

"The best thing for you, George, is to go away and to develop your own life and your own friends independently. Live by yourself and think things out. It's the best thing for him, Harry." Sure, why didn't I go to a nice college? Why didn't I take a nice flying jump in the lake? Why didn't I develop a nice tropical disease like sprue?

So I went. After a while you know when you're licked. I didn't say any goodbyes at the station. I didn't even look at Rosine.

I started to learn to live by myself and to think by myself. I learned to mix an excellent Martini. I learned to blow smoke rings. I learned to sleep four hours a night without missing the rest. I studied some and I faked some. My courses were light, and my average was poor. For a while I liked chemistry and I thought of majoring in it. With any encouragement I might have, but I never got around to getting encouraged. My adviser didn't like me enough to care what I did, and Harry didn't know. I never saw him again until he was in his coffin.

During the summer vacation I went to Mexico. Harry and Rosine wanted me to come to Burrow, and they wrote that they were driving down for me. They promised great things for the summer: sport and relaxation. A point of tennis here, or a hole of golf there. On a good day we might even go wading. I just couldn't wait.

Charlie Chandler and I bought a second-hand car and drove away a day before they arrived. I left a note for them, and a bottle of scotch as a present for their coming anniversary. Harry never drank and didn't know that I did, but Rosine liked a few — a few more than Harry ever suspected. The gift amused me because I knew it would hurt Harry and anger Rosine. But I knew she'd see to it that it wasn't wasted.

Considering our weakly inspired efforts toward the pursuit of pleasure, I guess we had a fair time in Mexico. We wrecked the car and spent a night at the local jail, and Charlie had to wire back for more cash. We managed to keep away all summer, and came back through California and Colorado, and finally by plane to

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Chicago, to the University. That's where the story really starts. Here's the explosion. I've still got the letter, and here's how it goes:

Dear George:

This will be a shock to you, I know, and I regret that you must receive the news in this way. Your father died this morning after a two weeks' illness. We tried to reach you when he first became ill, but you had already left the hotel in Mexico, and Dr. Mackett said he was improving, so we let things ride at that time. He did very well for a while, but early this morning he had a relapse, and Dr. Mackett could do nothing to save him. He did not suffer. If you get this within a few days, please come immediately. The funeral will be delayed until you arrive.

In sorrow,

Rosine

There's no point in trying to express the tide of sudden and sickening tragedy I felt. Intimate turmoil and sentiment have always embarrassed me, and even were I to try, I could not find the words to express the shock and futility that overcame me. I sat at my window with my coat on, the letter in my hand, my eyes sightless, dry, and painful. My head ached, I was nauseated, I could feel strong pulses in my brain and throat and abdomen. My door was opened once, but I don't know who looked in, who hesitated, who left silently. Then the room was dark and the letter was on the floor; and there was a numb, amputated feeling in my chest. I had no plans, but there was no doubt as to what I had to do. I took up my suitcase, full of soiled clothes but still packed, and left for the station. After a while the train came and I started back for Burrow.

It was night when I got there, and no one I knew was at the station. I took a cab to the Turk Funeral Home, where I knew he would be. Mr. Turk let me in, and then left me alone with Harry. He looked fine. But he was dead. I guess I cried, because his hand was wet in the morning when Mr. Turk made me let go and leave. He must have called the house, because the car was out front, with Andy at the wheel and Maggie waiting in the back. Only Maggie spoke on the trip home. Don't ask me what she said.

Rosine was at the door, and she walked with me to the library. It was cold, for September, and a fire was burning. Rosine was stylish in her black mourning clothes, with simple jewelry here and there. Her eyes showed no evidence of recent tears. My hate for her must have been palpable, but she ignored it. We had our first conversation since she became my stepmother — she sitting in front of the fireplace, and I was standing.

She said: "George, I know how you must feel. Please let me help."

I said: "Thanks."

She said: "George, sit down a minute, please, just rest for a moment."

I said: "No, thanks."

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She said: "You look tired and you must be hungry. Let me call Maggie to fix up something while you bathe."

I said: "No, thanks," and went up to my room. We had some more big conversations like that later on.

The funeral followed two days later. It was a large, simple but dignified, one, Harry had a lot of friends, and they were there from all over, mainly Burrow and Chicago. Turk had all his cars shining, and all his suits pressed, and everything went like a well-planned show. The routine things were said, the routine tears were shed; and Harry went to rest next to my mother in the family vault. That handed me a laugh, but Rosine didn't bat an eye. There was room for Harry, but none for Rosine. But I guess death was a distant personal thought to her at that moment. With her figure and coloring, black suited her very well, and she knew it. She was watching Harry being pushed into his niche and thinking: "There he goes, forever, and all I have left is my youth and beauty and the house and the cars and my furs and my jewels and thousands of new dollar bills . . ." It was a sad day for her, all right.

After we got back, a little of the pretext seemed to have left both of us. The ceremony was over and the immediate future was once again an actuality. We sat in the living-room, silently, looking at one another. Maggie brought two glasses on a tray and Rosine took one; I refused the other. Rosine smiled, and said: "Go ahead, George. It's sherry." I felt my face flush and I accepted the drink. Maggie left.

We sipped for a while. I lit a cigarette. I didn't ask her if she wanted one, although she probably did. After a while she sighed, tragically, and broke the silence. We had another big conversation.

"Well, George, what are we going to do?"

"I don't know."

"Your semester started a week ago. Aren't you going back?"

"No."

A pause. Then: "Harry would have wanted you to."

I didn't even answer.

We tried an encore on the sipping and sighing routine, and then she started the ball rolling again.

"There's dozens of things to be done. The office is being absorbed by the partners, and there's a settlement to be made and papers to be signed. There's lots of decisions to be made, too, George, which concern you as well as me; about the house, your income, and mine. Your father was a wealthy man and left you well provided for."

"I know." I was helping her out; I was answering her questions.

"Isn't there anything you want to ask?"

No — no — nothing at all. Nothing, except: How did my father die? *Why* did he die? Where were you when he "had a relapse"? Did you kill him, and how? No — there were

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no questions. Just a few doubts that were occupying all my thoughts, night and day; just a fear and a dread of the truth behind my father's death; an overwhelming need to know this truth. She was playing with me. She knew I wanted to ask these things, and she was waiting.

"No," I said, and exhausted by the conversation I went out to the pantry and finished the last glass of sherry, took a bottle of brandy which also happened to be handy, and went to bed. I slept pretty well that night, mostly because I was drunk for the first time in weeks.

In the morning I had a headache and felt washed out. I took aspirins and a benzedrine, and had a cigarette for breakfast. I left the house before Rosine got up.

Dr. Mackett's waiting room was full and I had no appointment, but I convinced his secretary that I wouldn't be more than a few minutes, and she let me in after a short wait. I think he was really glad to see me again, but a little undecided. He didn't ask how I was or anything about school. I guess he was afraid to. I didn't waltz around much before I got to the point.

"Tell me about Harry's illness, Dr. Mackett. I want to know just what happened."

"I'm afraid there isn't much to tell, George; it's just as you must have already heard. He had a heart attack, coronary thrombosis, and they're usually more serious in younger individuals. A piece of the heart muscle dies because the blood supplying it is suddenly stopped, and the patient has to rest very quietly until it's all healed up again."

"Are you sure that's what it was?"

"There's no doubt. My electrocardiograms proved it."

I was getting nowhere.

"But why did he die?" I asked him.

"While the dead muscle is healing, a dozen unfortunate things may happen. And some of them can't be avoided."

"What do you mean?" I wanted to know. "What are those things?"

"Well, if the patient doesn't get his absolute rest, the amount of heart muscle involved may increase, the heart can rupture, he can go into heart failure. Nobody knows exactly why some patients die, but they do. It's an extremely serious condition."

"But he was doing so well," I said. "What could have happened?"

He was beginning to get annoyed. "That's impossible to guess — so many things could have happened, it's unimportant just which one it was! We did everything to prevent it, but medical care can do so much and no more! He was on morphine and oxygen for several days, he had private nurses night and day, we gave him stimulants, we adjusted his diet. Sure, he was doing well at the beginning, but unfortunately that means nothing."

I didn't get much more out of him. A few kind words, a little advice. As far as he was concerned, there was

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nothing unusual, no suspicion. Everybody dies at 42. Be happy.

His secretary gave me the name of the private nurse who was on duty at the time Harry died, and I went to see her after lunch. She was asleep because she had taken another case and was still working the midnight to 8:00 A.M. shift, but she was only too willing to get up and talk. She was about 43 or 45, plain, and she wore no wedding ring. Harry had been a good patient and she had been fond of him. She had been very upset by his death.

There was, however, little more that I learned from her. Harry had been doing well when she had left him the day before his death. According to the day nurses, his last day had been comfortable and uneventful, with good spirits, fair appetite, normal temperature and blood pressure. His only visitors had been Rosine and Maggie. He had had his usual sleeping pill (prescribed by the doctor and kept in the medicine cabinet in the adjoining bath), and was asleep when she came on duty for the last time. About 12:30 A.M. he had awakened complaining of pains in his chest and abdomen and shortness of breath. She had taken his temperature (normal), and his pulse, which was rapid and thready, and had called the doctor. He had arrived in twenty-five minutes, by which time Harry had vomited twice. The oxygen, which was still available at the bedside, was started again, and the morphine series re-ordered. In spite of this, however, he had lapsed into coma and died about 9:15 in the morning. It was difficult to elicit information without motivating suspicion, but as far as was obvious, nothing unusual had been noticed.

"He was a fine man, and we were all distressed at the turn he took after doing so well," she said, "but it's happened time and again. Dr. Mackett is a very cautious man — I've worked with him on other cases — and even when your father's condition began to improve during the first week, he kept warning us that the danger was not yet over and to continue absolute bed rest. Your mother suggested discontinuing the evening and night nurses, but Dr. Mackett wouldn't hear of it."

"Was she there when he died?" I asked.

"I awakened her just before I called the doctor, and she stayed with him until he died. I must say she behaved very well at a most difficult time. She was quiet and stayed out of the way while Dr. Mackett and I were busy, and she caused no fuss at all. I think she realized he was going when she first saw him, and after he went there were no hysterics. She just went back to her room by herself. I didn't see her again before I left and I never had a chance to offer my sympathies."

"I'm sure she realized how you felt and appreciated everything you did," I told her. "Did you get to see much of her while he was sick?"

"Well, of course *I* didn't on the 12

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to 8 shift, but the other girls saw quite a bit of her. She and Maggie would sometimes sit in while the girls went down to eat, or sometimes she came up and helped your father with his own meals. She was very patient and helpful."

Sure. A regular Florence Nightingale. A regular Florence Mata Hari Cleopatra Jack-the-Ripper Nightingale.

I thanked her and left. I still didn't know where to look for the truth, how to ask, what to do. I went back to the house and ate dinner in the kitchen, with Maggie. She didn't like it, and she showed it, but knew she couldn't do anything about it. I went to my room and took a few nembutals. I hadn't seen Rosine all that day, but I could hear her moving around in her room down the hall. At one point, just before I fell asleep, I thought I heard the sound of fluid being poured into a glass. And it didn't sound like mineral oil.

A day passed without my leaving the house at all. Rosine got up early and drove to Chicago, presumably on some business at Harry's office, and I took the opportunity to stay in and look around. I went through Harry's room, with Maggie interrupting frequently, and selected a few pictures and personal items I wanted to keep. There were a good many things I knew were missing, and Maggie hadn't removed them, so Rosine must have been through the room and supervised the cleaning. There were no medicines in the cabinet. The shades were drawn and the room had the appearance of being unused, impersonal, made up and awaiting tenants.

Rosine's door was locked, which I thought was curious. I could have got in through the window, but not without a fuss from Maggie, so I let it ride. Andy ran out and got me a bottle of rye and I started it in the afternoon, finished it after supper, and I was already in bed when I heard the car drive up, and later Rosine came up the stairs, rattled some keys, and unlocked her door. Maggie brought a tray to her room and I could hear them talking softly for a while. Her light was still on when I fell asleep, and I think she spent most of the time at her desk, writing.

I was up early the next morning and had come into the dining-room before I realized that Rosine was already there. She was at the far end of the table, in a blue housecoat, her hair in a turban, smoking a cigarette with her coffee. I sat down, she said hello, I answered. Maggie brought me some toast and tried to talk me into some eggs, without success, and Rosine poured out some coffee and passed it down. I got down to a cigarette while she was lighting her third, and we sat for a while, admiring my smoke-rings. Then we got conversational again.

"What did you do yesterday?" she wanted to know.

"Nothing much," I told her. Straight answers, to the point. That's me all the time.

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"Any plans for today?" She spoke slowly, without much interest.

"No," I said, after a pause. I wanted to hear her suggestions.

"I cleared up a lot of details at the office yesterday, but there's still a lot to be done and I think you'd better join on some of it. It concerns you, and your signature is required on a few forms. Will you come with me?"

I said O.K. and waited while she went upstairs to dress. A lot of talking always exhausts me, and I had a few stiff ones from a bottle in the pantry, which seems to be a pretty constant new household addition.

She came down in about an hour, dressed to the teeth in green, with yellow gloves the color of her hair. She smiled at me without humor, knowing my thoughts. Mourning was officially over. Sorrow was officially gone — for Rosine, at least.

My part of the business was short and painless. Harry's affairs had apparently always been fairly tidy and required little attention, and the partners in the office were able to expedite matters.

The house was mine, with Maggie's income assured if she remained, an annuity if she chose to leave. The grounds included the lake, the stables, and neighboring property which was currently being rented. His business was to be dissolved if I showed no interest, and a financial settlement to be added to the estate, which was to be divided two-thirds to Rosine and one-third to me. Any education or training I might desire would be paid for separately. I was surprised to learn how expensive his illness had been, but with all deductions, Rosine was a wealthy woman.

She was very efficient in handling all the matters which concerned her and read everything through before signing, frequently asking questions. Money was her medium and she handled it well. She ignored me completely except when my participation was required, and appeared to be unaware of my presence when absorbed in her own work. I envied her and hated her for her lack of concern, knowing that she probably realized this and was amused by it.

In the afternoon I drove back alone, leaving Rosine to shopping and the late train.

As I approached Burrow I left the main road and followed the path to the lake, where I parked the car in front of the boathouse. It was cool and cloudy, the water appeared dark and bottomless, the island distant, dead, and forbidding. I went into the boathouse and was surprised to discover that neither the rowboat nor the canoe was there any longer. On the wall hung two pairs of trunks, Harry's and mine — dry, faded, and wrinkled. I don't know how long I sat there looking out at the island, dismally aware of a moral disintegration, a lack of all direction and ambition. I felt lost and without purpose, like a neurotic rat following the aimless pathways in the psychologist's maze, or a hunter turning circles in a

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dark and friendless forest. Although still anxious to uncover the truth behind this tragedy which had consumed my entire existence, I could see no prospect for clearing the doubt, dispelling the fear. I had become so intensively centered upon conflict and turmoil that I suddenly felt a complete exhaustion, a need for flight.

I drove with new purpose as I left the lake and headed back to the house. I felt that I had achieved direction for the first time in weeks, even though my decision was only to leave immediately. Specific plans were unimportant; I had to leave. I should never have gone back, of course — I should have fled as soon as I had decided. Look what could have been avoided.

The sky was black when I returned, though it was not yet evening and rain threatened momentarily. The house appeared larger and darker as I approached it, solid and ominous, with enough granite to fortify Belgium. Winds began to rise suddenly and whip about corners with mocking, laughing noises.

Maggie was at the door, asking if I wanted supper. I told her I had eaten. She asked if Rosine would be back soon, and I was surprised to hear that she was not yet back. As I passed her door I tried it and found it unlocked. I stepped in and turned on the lights.

The room had been changed completely, from a pleasant guest room to a colorful, vulgar, perfumed boudoir, personally and distastefully Rosine's. Even had I been invited in, I am sure I would have felt its resentment. There were many ashtrays: by the phone, by the bed, on a sink in the bathroom, on the dressing table. The medicine cabinet contained highball glasses and spoons, a bottle of bitters, a dried piece of lime. Cosmetics of all types were everywhere: false lashes, false nails, paints and powders, shampoos, soaps shaped like everything but soap.

The closets were full of woman's clothes, a few black items, but mostly bright and dressy. On the floor of the closet were a row of bottles, mostly unopened, a few partially empty, and one completely empty. I had this last one in my hand and was looking at it when she spoke behind me.

"It's a good brand, George. Too bad there's none left."

I felt panic and fear, knowing the moment had come. I wanted to escape before she could say more; I wanted to leave her to her wealth, to free her of all traffic with me, if only she would say no more and let me go. But I stood there, holding the bottle, wishing I would die, knowing there was no longer any doubt. I heard her close the door, light a match, sit on the bed. I waited.

"Put down that bottle and sit down. We've got some talking to do."

I put it down in the closet and turned around. She wasn't smiling. I think she actually pitied me, like a broken dog she was about to kill. Nothing existed in the room but her eyes, which stared into mine.

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"You've wanted to know for a long time, haven't you, George? But you've been afraid to ask. So you've been snooping, and running around seeing Dr. Mackett and the nurses and Maggie and the shopkeepers. Do you know now, George, or shall I tell you?"

I couldn't speak. I stumbled into an armchair and shut my eyes, trying to force back the tears, but they flooded out between my lids and kept pouring down my face as she spoke.

"I don't think I would have hated you if you hadn't hated me, George. You weren't important enough. I was fond of your father, but you both had yourselves so tightly entwined that no one else could get into the ball game. Even after we were married, I couldn't break in. You took care of that, too, George. You knew he would never be happy until you came back. You knew this marriage couldn't last if it broke the two of you up permanently, and you thought you could break it up sooner or later. You were pretty smart, George."

Fear of an individual is difficult to endure, and hate is painful and demoralizing, but fear and hate and naked, uncovered shame are intolerable. Had I seen pity in her eyes? There was none now; her words came hot and short, sharp with venom.

"You almost won, George, but you didn't know it! You didn't realize that if you had come home this summer you would have seen that it was either you or me; but you didn't come! You bought a car and went to Mexico, and you left me a nice bottle of scotch. Hard-to-get, pre-war scotch. With the cellophane cracked and a pin-point piercing the cork . . ."

"Yes, George, I fully appreciated your gift, and I saved it. I wondered for a while, and then, one day, I found out. I was acting under doctor's orders. Dr. Mackett said that alcohol was good for your father when he had the heart attack, and he told him to start using some. We started him on wine first, sherry, then a highball. And then he started to improve, and you were on your way back from Mexico, and I was on my way out. I gave him a drink of your scotch. It didn't work for hours, George, and I thought I had been wrong. What was in it, George? Was it one of your chemical mixtures? Is that why you got your best grades in chemistry?"

That was it. Now I knew. There was no more doubt.

"Goodbye, George."

That was last night. Rosine packed in the morning and has gone for good. Back to New York, I guess.

I have been in my room ever since, and even Maggie has given up bringing trays and trying to call me. I guess she has gone for Dr. Mackett again. What should I do? Where shall I go? I cannot remain here, though it is now my house, my tomb.

I have no desire to continue to live, but I am afraid to die. I don't think I could face Harry. When you find me, help me, please help me. Read this and help me — if you can . . .

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PRIZE-WINNER IN LAST YEAR'S CONTEST

CARIBBEAN BLOW

by GROVER BRINKMAN

LIGHTNING, LIKE A FIERY PENCIL, burned a path across the sky, painting weird, ghostly pictures. In the brief photoflash, Morrison saw foam-flecked water sluicing over the road, swift as a millrace. He wiped the salt spray from his eyes, screwed up the window tight, disregarding the heat.

The boxes were shifting again, inside the paneled body of the truck. Something clattered to the floor. That would be one of the retrieving nets — the one with the long, hollow aluminum handle.

The radio fried like a pan of potatoes. He caught a few words from a newscast — something about a guy named Lucio or Lithio. He turned it off in disgust.

Fatigue was etched on his lean face and in the slump of his body over the wheel.

"This one was hatched in the Caribbean!" he mumbled to himself. "It'll blow all night — and then some!"

Any moment now, the Highway Patrol would close the road, unless the blow subsided. He wondered if he'd get through to Palmetto before the pounding surf really started tearing things up.

Lightning sunfished through the sky again, and he saw the water crashing over the sea wall. He half turned in his seat and unlatched the wire-covered trap door that gave him access to the truck body from the front seat. He played his flash over the boxes, wondering how long they would stand up to the continual jostling.

Driftwood came pouring over the macadam, and he yanked the wheel hard to avoid striking it. He heard the boxes shift, and again something clattered to the floor.

The headlights cut a yellow swath through the rain, and suddenly Morrison picked out the figure of a man standing at the side of the road. He was waving his arms in wild abandon. On the slope, half submerged, was an overturned car. The man seemed muddy, unkempt, as if he had just crawled out of the wreck.

Morrison braked the truck, saw the man come forward. He was a pint-sized individual, Morrison noted, and he limped.

The door was yanked open. The first thing he saw was the gun. It was too late now. The little guy came inside, dripping water, gun first. "Okay. Shove it in gear and let's get rolling!"

He was a punk, Morrison reasoned,

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if ever there was one. But he had a gun. He seemed needled, jumpy. Rivulets of water ran off wisps of his matted black hair and down his skinny face.

"What's the gun for?" Morrison asked.

"Just keep driving," the little guy said. His voice was clipped, nervous.

"Sure I'll keep driving! If I don't, we'll drown like rats —"

In the half light, he imagined that the little guy cringed. He drove slowly, watching for debris. The road dipped sharply, and suddenly he felt the tug of deeper water. He saw the log heading toward them before it struck. The truck whipped and swayed, and Morrison heard the crash of boxes.

The little guy acted tough. But underneath the veneer, Morrison wondered just how tough he really was.

He eased up on the accelerator, half turned in his seat. "You'd like to get to Palmetto, wouldn't you? We might make it, if the water doesn't stop us. The storm might even give *you* a break. Phone lines are down and that radio is sizzling like a pan of fish —"

"You know about it —"

"Got a few snatches of a news broadcast about fifteen minutes ago, between static bursts —"

"Keep talking."

Morrison grinned. "You're a hood named Danny Lucio or Lithio, I'm not sure. You and a pal robbed the Golden Dragon at Gulf City — got away with a big haul, eleven grand —"

The little guy patted his wet coat pocket.

"You slugged a house dick and gunned a cop —"

The little guy's face was jerking again. "Don't forget — my pal's dead, back there in that wreck — just as cold as that cop!"

"Too bad *you* walked away —"

The gun came up menacingly. "You're beginning to yap like a cop!"

Morrison's mirthless grin came back. "I'm not a cop. But watch out ahead. There'll be a patrol car along soon, to check the road before they close it. What are your plans, when that winking red light comes —"

"Shut up!" the little guy shouted.

The storm, if anything, grew worse. Water was swirling over the strip of macadam now, axle deep. Lightning laced the sky in crazy-quilt patterns, and thunder echoed in deep, ominous rumble.

"Good night to kill a cop," Morrison said mirthlessly.

The little guy cringed in his corner. "Quit yapping! I've got the gun, mister — that makes me boss!"

"You wouldn't use it."

"Why?"

"We'll be meeting the patrol car, any moment now. If you use the gun, you'd have to drive the truck —"

"I could dump the truck —"

"And swim? The gulf's covered the salt marshes now, for miles and

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miles. The highway's the only ribbon of safety to Palmetto."

The crash of a breaker tipped them on two wheels. Morrison fought the machine to keep it from going over. He heard the boxes pile up and splinter as the truck bounced back on all four wheels, careening down the wind-lashed road.

Salt water would be trickling through the truck now, adding a new danger. Instinctively, he glanced at the trap door.

The little guy caught the look, half turned in his seat, scanning the door. Slowly a crafty smile twisted his skinny face.

"So you've got a bright idea," Morrison said. "You're going through the trap door when the patrol car shows up —"

"Bright boy! And who's going to stop me?"

Morrison's face sobered. "Look, fellow —"

"Can it! I'll slide through the trap the moment the red light comes over the hill. And the gun will be on your backbone, so you'd better make it good with the cops!"

Lightning stabbed the night again, and Morrison saw the massed driftwood even before it struck. He yanked hard on the wheel, slammed on the brakes. But he was a second late. The impact wheeled the truck half around, shot it off the road. He gunned the motor, but nothing happened. They were stalled.

"Isn't that just dandy!" the little guy screeched. "You big clumsy —"

He stopped, jerked up. Morrison peered through the fogged windshield. Far ahead, a red light was blinking, on and off —

The little guy wheeled in his seat. One hand reached upward to unlatch the trap. The gun was pointed upward, and in the half light his face was twitching.

"I'm going through the trap, fella! As soon as I get through, close the door and turn the knob. No funny business now! Just remember, this gat'll be on your funnybone every second —"

Morrison suddenly raised his voice. "You can't do that —"

"Who's going to stop me?"

"Look!" Morrison bellowed above the storm. "Don't do it —"

The little guy laughed.

Morrison clamped his lips, glanced up the road. The red light was coming steadily forward, winking on and off — on and off — Abstractedly, he wondered why cops carried such an obvious signal light.

The little guy was on his knees atop the seat now. With his left hand he pulled open the trap, slid a leg inside. The gun was jerking. Morrison heard his feet strike the floor. Then the trapdoor was shoved tight, from the inside.

"Turn the knob!" the little guy ordered. "And don't forget — my gun —"

Morrison reached up and secured the door, just as the little guy's scream echoed above the whine and hiss of the wind.

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He screamed — again and again.

Sick and retchy, Morrison stumbled out of the truck, felt the salt spray sting his eyes, halt his breath. He stood there, bracing himself against the side of the truck.

The little guy still was screaming. Suddenly his gun roared, again and again, until the clip was empty. Morrison heard the Windshield shatter. Then the screams died down —

The patrol car came alongside, skidded to a stop. A man in a slicker came round the car, to where Morrison was standing.

"We're checking the road. We're also looking for a killer —"

"I know," Morrison said. "A little punk by the name of Lucio or Lithio — the static drowned out the name. He's in the back of the truck."

The patrolman gave him a quizzical look, then started around to the rear of the stalled truck.

"Wait!" Morrison said. "Better leave him inside until I can get towed into town. It might be — safer."

The patrolman made a guttural sound, deep in his throat. With his flash he peered inside the cab, then threw the light beam on the rain-drenched panel. The light focused on the firm name painted on the panel: *MORRISON SNAKE FARM.*

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THE LONG DINNER

by H. C. BAILEY

"I DISLIKE YOU," SAID MR. FORTUNE. "Some of the dirtiest linen I've seen." He gazed morosely at the Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department.

"Quite," Lomas agreed. "Dirty fellow. What about those stains?"

"Oh, my dear chap!" Mr. Fortune mourned. "Paint. All sorts of paint. Also food and drink and assorted filth. Why worry me? What did you expect? Human gore?"

"I had no expectations," said Lomas.

A certain intensity came into Mr. Fortune's blue eyes. "Yes. I hate you," he murmured. "Anything else you wanted to know?"

"A lot of things," Lomas said. "You're not useful, Reginald. I want to know what sort of fellow he was, and what's become of him."

"He was an artist of dark complexion. He painted both in oils and water colors. He lived a coarse and dissolute life, and had expensive tastes. What's become of him, I haven't the slightest idea. I should say he was on the way to the devil. What's it all about? Why this morbid interest in the debauched artist?"

"Because the fellow's vanished," said Lomas. "He is a painter of sorts, as you say. Name — Derry Farquhar. He had a talent and a bit of a success years ago, and he's gone downhill ever since. Not altogether unknown to the police — money under false pretense and that sort of thing — but never any clear case. Ten days ago a woman turned up to give information that Mr. Derry Farquhar was missing. He had some money out of her — a matter of £50 — three months ago. She don't complain of that. She was used to handing him donations — that kind of woman and that kind of man. What worries her is that since this particular £50 he's faded out. And it is a queer case. He's lived these ten years in a rat-hole of a flat in Bloomsbury. He's not been seen there for months. That's unlike him. He's never been long away before. A regular London loafer. And his own money — he's got a little income from a trust — has piled up in the bank. August and September dividends untouched. That's absolutely unlike him. Besides that: one night about a fortnight

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ago — we can't fix the date — somebody was heard in the flat making a good deal of noise. When Bell went to have a look at things, he found the place in a devil of a mess, and a heap of foul linen. So we sent that to you."

"Hoping for proof of bloodshed," Reggie murmured. "Hopeful fellow. Shirts extremely foul, but affordin' no evidence of foul play. Blood is absent. Almost the only substance that is."

"So you don't believe there's anything in the case?"

"My dear chap! Oh, my dear chap. Belief is a serious operation. I believe you haven't found anything. That's all. I should say you didn't look."

"Thank you," said Lomas acidly. "Bell raked it all over." He spoke into the telephone, and Superintendent Bell arrived with a fat folder.

"Mr. Fortune thinks you've missed something, Bell," Lomas smiled.

"If there was anything any use, I have," Bell said heavily. "I'll be glad to hear what it is. Here's some inventory and the photographs."

"You might pick up a bargain, Reginald," said Lomas, while Reggie, with a decent solemnity, perused the inventory and contemplated the photographs.

"Four oil paintings, fifteen water colors. Unframed," he read.

"I'd call 'em clever, myself," said Bell. "Not nice, you know, but very bright and showy. Nudes of ladies, and that sort of thing. I should have thought he could have made a tidy living out of them. But a picture dealer that's seen 'em priced 'em at half a dollar each. Anyway, it don't tell us anything."

"I wouldn't say that. No," Reggie murmured. "Builds up the character of Mr. Farquhar for us. Person of no honor, even in his potboilin' art. However. Nothing else in the flat?"

"Some letters — mostly bills and duns. Nothing to work on."

Reggie turned over the correspondence quickly. "Yes. As you say." He stopped at a crumpled, stained card. "Where was this?"

"In a pocket of a dirty old sports coat," Bell said. "It's only a menu. I don't know why he kept it. Some faces drawn on the back. Perhaps he fancied 'em. No accounting for taste. Looks like drawing devils to me."

"Rather diabolical, yes," Reggie murmured quietly. The faces were sketched, in pencil, with a few accomplished strokes, but had no distinction: the same face in variations of grin and scowl and leer: a face of black brows, mustache, and pointed beard. He turned the card to the menu written on the front and read:

Dîner
Artichauts à l'Huile
Pommes de Terre à l'Huile
Porc frais froid aux Cornichons
Langouste Mayonnaise
Canard aux Navets
Omelette Rognons
Filet garni
Fromage à la Crème
Fruits, biscuits

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"Good Gad! Some dinner," Lomas chuckled.

"I don't say I get it all," Bell frowned. "But what's it come to? He did himself well sometime."

"Well!" Reggie groaned. "Oh, my dear chap! Artichokes in oil, cold pork, lobster, duck and turnips — and a kidney omelette and roast beef and trimmings."

"I've got to own it wants a stomach," said Bell gloomily. "What then?"

"Died of indigestion," said Lomas. "Or committed suicide in the pangs. Very natural. Very just. There you are, Bell. Mr. Fortune has solved the case."

"I was taking it seriously myself," Bell glowered at them.

"Oh, my Bell!" Reggie sighed. "So was I." He turned on Lomas. "Incurably flippant mind, your mind. This is the essential fact. Look for Mr. Farquhar in Brittany."

Bell breathed hard. "How do you get to that, sir?"

"No place but a Brittany inn ever served such a dinner."

Bell rubbed his chin. "I see. I don't know Brittany myself, I'm glad to say. I got to own I never met a dinner like it." He looked at Lomas. "That means putting it back on the French."

"Quite," Lomas smiled. "Brilliant thought, Reginald. Would you be surprised to hear that Paris is asking us to look for Mr. Derry Farquhar in England?"

"Well, well." Reggie surveyed him with patient contempt. "Another relevant fact which you didn't mention. Also indicatin' an association of your Mr. Farquhar with France."

"If you like," Lomas shrugged. "But the point is, they are sure he's here. Dubois is coming over today. I'm taking him to dine at the club. You'd better join us."

"Oh, no. No," Reggie said quickly. "Dubois will dine with me. You bring him along. Your club dinner would destroy his faith in the English intelligence. If any. And I like Dubois. Pleasant to discuss the case with a serious mind. Good-bye. Half-past eight. . . ."

Dubois wiped his flowing mustaches. "My homage," he said reverently.

By way of a deviled biscuit, they came to another claret. Dubois looked and smelled and tasted, and his eyes returned thanks. "Try it with a medlar," Reggie purred.

"You are right. There is no fruit better with wine."

They engaged upon a ritual of ecstasy while Lomas gave himself a glass of port and lit a cigarette. At that, Reggie gave a reproachful stare. "My only aunt! Forgive him, Dubois. He's mere modern English."

"I pity profoundly," Dubois sighed. "A bleak life. This is a great wine, my friend. Of Pauillac, I think, eh?"

"Quite good, yes," Reggie purred. "Mouton Rothschild 1900."

Dubois's large face beamed. "Aha. Not so bad for poor old Dubois."

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Lomas became restive. "This unanimity is touching. Now you've embraced each other all over, we might come to business."

Dubois turned to him with a gesture of deprecation. "Pardon, my friend. Have no fear. We agree always. But I will not delay you. The affair is, after all, very simple ——"

"Quite," Lomas smiled. "Tell Fortune. He has his own ideas about it."

"Aha." Dubois's eyebrows went up. "I shall be grateful. Well, I begin, then, with Max Weber. He is what you call a profiteer, but, after all, a good fellow. It is a year ago he married a pretty lady. She was by courtesy an actress, the beautiful Clotilde. One has nothing else against her. They live together very happily in an apartment of luxury. Two weeks ago, they find that some of her jewels, which she had in her bedroom, are gone. Not all that Weber had given her, the most valuable are at the bank, but diamonds worth 500,000 francs. Weber comes to the Sûreté and makes a complaint. What do we find? The servants, they have been with Weber many years, they are spoiled, they are careless; but dishonest — I think not. There is no sign of a burglary. But the day before the jewels were missed, a man came to the Weber apartment who asked for Madame Weber and was told she was not at home. That was true in fact, but, also, Weber's man did not like his look. A *gouape* of the finest water — that is the description. What you call a blackguard, is it not? The man was shabby but showy; he resembled exactly a loafer in the Quartier Latin, an artist *décavé* — how do you say that?"

"On his uppers. Yes. Still more interesting. But not an identification."

"Be patient still. You see, here is a type which might well have known *la belle* Clotilde before she was Madame Weber. Very well. This gentleman, when he was refused at the Weber door, he did not go far away. We have a *concierge* who saw him loitering till the afternoon at least. In the afternoon the Weber servants take their ease. The man went to a café — he admits it — one woman calls on a friend here, another there. What more easy than for the blackguard artist to enter, to take the jewel case, to hop it, as you say."

"Well, then, I begin from a description of Monsieur the Blackguard. It is not so bad. A man who is plump and dark, with little dark whiskers, who had front teeth which stand out, who walks like a bird running, with short steps that go pit-pat. He speaks French well enough, but not like a Frenchman. He wears clothes of orange color, cut very loose, and a soft black hat of wide brim. Then I find that a man like this got into the night train from the Gare St.-Lazare for Dieppe — that is, you see, to come back to England by the cheap way. Very well. We have worked in the Quartier Latin, we find that a man like this was seen a day or two in some of the cafés. They remember

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him well, because they knew him ten years ago, when he was a student. They are like that, these old folks of the Quartier — it pays. Then his name was Farquhar, Derek Farquhar, an Englishman." Dubois twirled his mustaches. "So you see, my friend, I dare to trouble Mr. Lomas to find me in England this Farquhar."

"Yes. Method quite sound," Reggie mumbled. "As a method."

"My poor Reginald," Lomas laughed. "What a mournful, reluctant confession! You've hurt him, Dubois. He was quite sure Mr. Farquhar was traversing the wilds of Brittany."

"Aha." Dubois put up his eyebrows, and made a gesture of respect to Reggie. "My dear friend, never I consult you but I find you see farther than I. Tell me then."

"Oh, no. No. Don't see it all," Reggie mumbled, and told him of the menu of the long dinner.

"Without doubt that dinner was served in Brittany," Dubois nodded. "I agree, it is probable he had been there not so long ago. But what of that? He was a painter, he had studied in France, and Brittany is always full of painters."

"Yes. You're neglectin' part of the evidence. Faces on the back of the menu." He took out his pocket book, and sketched the black-browed, black-bearded countenance. "Like that."

"The devil," said Dubois.

"As you say. Devil of opera and fancy ball. The ordinary Mephistopheles. Associated by your Mr. Farquhar with Brittany."

"My dear Fortune!" Dubois's big face twisted into a quizzical smile. "You are very subtle. Me, I find this is to make too much of little things. After all, drawing devils, it is common sport — you find devils all over our comic papers — a devil and a pretty lady — and he drew pretty ladies often, you say, this Farquhar — and this is a very common devil."

"Yes, rational criticism," Reggie murmured, looking at him with dreamy eyes. "You're very rational, Dubois. However. Any association of the Webers with Brittany?"

"Oh, my friend!" Dubois smiled indulgently. "None at all. And when they go out of Paris, it is to Monte Carlo, to Aix, not to rough it in Brittany, you may be sure. No. You shall forgive me, but I find nothing in your menu to change my mind. I must look for my Farquhar here." He shook his head sadly at Reggie. "I am desolated that you do not agree." He turned to Lomas. "But this is the only way, *hein?*"

"Absolutely. There's no other line at all," said Lomas, with satisfaction. "Don't let Fortune worry you. He lives to see what isn't there. Wonderful imagination."

"My only aunt!" Reggie moaned. "Not me, no. No imagination at all. Only simple faith in facts. You people ignore 'em when they're not rational. Unscientific and superstitious. However. Let's pretend and see what we get. Go your own way."

"One does as one can," Dubois shrugged.

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"Quite. Fortune is never content with the possible. We must work it out here. I've put things in train for you. We have a copy of Farquhar's photograph. That's been circulated with description, and there's a general warning out for him and the jewels. We're combing out all his friends and his usual haunts."

" 'So runs my dream, but what am I?' " Reggie murmured. " 'An infant cryin' in the night. An infant cryin' for the light ——' Well, well. Are we downhearted? Yes. A little Armagnac would be grateful and comfortin' ." He turned the conversation imperatively to the qualities of that liqueur, and Dubois was quick with respectful responses. Lomas relapsed upon Olympian disdain, and whiskey.

When he took Dubois away, "Fantastic fellow, Fortune, isn't he?" Lomas smiled. "Mind of the first order, but never content to use it."

"An artist, my friend," said Dubois. "He feels life. We think about it."

"Damme, you don't believe he's right about this Brittany guess?"

"What do I know?" Dubois shrugged. "It means nothing. Therefore it is nothing for us. However, one must confess, he is disconcerting, your Mr. Fortune. He makes one always doubt."

Some days later he was engaged upon the production in his marionette theatre of the tragedy of *Don Juan*, lyrics by Lord Byron, prose and music by Mr. Fortune, when the telephone called him from a poignant passage on the rejection of his hero by hell.

"Yes, Fortune speaking. 'Between two worlds life hovers like a star.' Perhaps you didn't know that, Lomas. 'How little do we know that which we are.' Discovery of the late Lord Byron. I'm settin' it to music. Departmental ditty for the Criminal Investigation Department. I ——"

"Could you listen for a moment?" said Lomas sweetly. "You might be interested."

"Not likely, no. However. What's worryin' you?"

"Nothing, except sympathy for you, Reginald. I'm afraid you'll suffer. To break it gently, we've traced Farquhar. But not in Brittany."

Reggie remained calm. "No. Of course not," he moaned. "You weren't trying. I don't want to hear what you've missed. Takes too long."

A sound of mockery came over the wire. "Are you ever wrong, Reginald? No. It's always the other fellow. But the awkward fact is, Farquhar hadn't gone to Brittany, he'd gone to Westshire. So that was the only place we could find him. We have our limitations."

"You have. Yes. *C'est brutal, mais ça marche.* You're clumsy, but you move — sometimes — like the early cars. What has he got to say?"

"I don't know. We haven't put our hands on him yet. We — what?"

"Pardon me. It was only emotion. A sob of reverence. Oh, my Lomas. You found the only place you could find him, so you haven't found him.

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The perfect official. No results, but always the superior person."

"Results quite satisfactory," Lomas snapped. "We had a clear identification. He's been staying at Lyncombe. He's bolted again. But we shall get him. They're combing out the district. Bell's gone down with Dubois."

"Splendid. Always shut the stable door when the horse has been removed. I'll go too. I like watching that operation. Raises my confidence in the police force."

As the moon rose over the sea, Reggie's car drove into Lyncombe. It is a holiday town of some luxury. The affronts to nature of its blocks of hotels and twisting roads of villas for the opulent retired have not yet been able to spoil all the beauty.

He went to the newest hotel, he bathed well and dined badly, and, as he sat smoking his consolatory pipe on a balcony where the soft air smelled of chrysanthemums and the sea, Dubois came to him with Bell.

"Aha." Dubois spoke. "You have not gone to Brittany then, my friend?"

"No. No. Following the higher intelligence. I have a humble mind. And where have you got to?"

"We have got to the tracks of Farquhar, there is no doubt of that. What is remarkable, he had registered in his own name at the hotel, and the people there recognize his photograph — they are sure of it. In fact, it is a face to be sure of, a rabbit face."

"The identification's all right," Bell grunted. "The devil of it is, he's gone again, Mr. Fortune. He went in a hurry too. Left all his traps behind, such as they were. The hotel people think he was just bilking them. He'd been a matter of ten days and not paid anything, and his baggage is worth about nothing — a battered old suitcase and some duds fit for the dustbin."

"Oh, Peter!" Reggie moaned. "No, Bell, no. I haven't got to look at his shirts again?"

"I'm not asking you, sir. There's no sort of reason to think there was anything done to him. He just went out and didn't come back. Three days ago. I don't see any light at all. What he was doing here beats me. You can say he was hiding with the swag he got in Paris. But then, why did he register in his own name? Say he was just a silly ass — you do get that kind of amateur thief. But what has he bolted for? He couldn't have had any suspicions we were on to him. We weren't, at the time he faded out."

"But, my friend, you go too fast," said Dubois. "From you, no, he could not have had any alarm. But there is the other end — Paris. It is very possible that a friend in Paris warned him the police were searching for him."

"All right," Bell grunted. "I give you that. Why would he make the hotel people notice him by bolting without paying his bill? Silly again. Sheer silly. He'd got a pot of money,

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if he did have the jewels, like you say. Going off without paying 'em, just sent them to the police quick."

"That is well argued. You have an insight, a power of mind, my friend." Dubois's voice was silky. "But what have we then? It is quite natural that Farquhar should disappear again, it is not natural that he should disappear like this. For me, I confess I do not find myself able to form an idea of Farquhar. That he is the type to rob such a woman as Clotilde, there is evidence enough — he had the knowledge, he had the opportunity. So far, there are a thousand cases like it. But that he should then retire to such a paradise of the bourgeois, that is not like his type."

"That's right," said Bell. "No sense in it anyway."

"No. As you say," Reggie murmured. "That struck me. Happy to agree with everybody. We don't know anything about anything."

"*Bigre!* You go a little strong," Dubois rumbled. "Come, there is at least a connection with Clotilde, and her jewels are gone. Be sure of that. Weber is an honest man — except in business. And what, now, is your hypothesis? You said look for him in Brittany. This at least is certain — he had not gone there. What the devil should he have to do with this so correct Lyncombe? As much as with our rough Brittany."

"Yes. Quite obscure. I haven't the slightest idea what he's been doing. However. Are we downhearted? No. We're in touch with the fundamental problem now. Why does Mr. Farquhar deal with Brittany and Clotilde and Lyncombe? First method of solution clearly indicated. Find out what he *did* do in Lyncombe. That ought to be an easy one, Bell. He must have been noticed. He'd be conspicuous in this correct place. Good night."

The next day he sat upon the same balcony, spreading the first scone of his tea with clotted cream and blackberry jelly, when the two returned.

"What! Have you not moved since last night?" Dubois made a grimace.

"My dear chap! Just walked all along one of the bays. And back. Great big bay. Exercise demanded by impatient and fretful brain. Rest is better. Have a splitter. They're too heavy. But the cream is sound."

Dubois shuddered. "Brr! You are a wonderful animal. Me, I am only human. But Bell has news for you. Tell him, old fellow."

"It's like this," Bell explained. "About a week ago — that's three or four days before he disappeared, we can't fix the date nearer — Farquhar went to call at one of the big houses here. There's no doubt about that. It's rather like the Paris case. He was seen loafing round before and after — as you said, he's the sort of chap to get noticed. The house he went to belongs to an old gentleman — Mr. Lane Hudson. Lived here for years. Very rich, they say. Made his money in South Wales, and came here when he retired.

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Well, he's eighty or more; he's half-paralyzed — only gets about his house and grounds in a wheeled chair. I've seen him; I've had a talk with him. His mind's all right. He looks like a mummy, only a bit plumped out. Sort of yellow, leathery face that don't change or move. Sits in his chair looking at nothing, and talks soft and thick. He tells me he never heard of Farquhar: didn't so much as know Farquhar had been to his house: that's quite in order, it's his rule that the servants tell anybody not known he's not well enough to see people, and I don't blame him. I wouldn't want strangers to come and look at me if I was like he is. I gave him an idea of the sort of fellow Farquhar was, and watched him pretty close, but he didn't turn a hair. He just said again he had no knowledge of any such person, and I believe him. He wasn't interested. He told me the fellow had no doubt come begging for money; he was much exposed to that sort of thing — we ought to stop it — and good day Mr. Superintendent. Anyhow, it's certain Farquhar didn't see him. The old butler and the nurse bear that out, and they never heard of Farquhar before. The butler saw him and turned him away — had a spot of bother over it, but didn't worry. Like the old man, he says they do have impudent beggars now and then. So here's another nice old dead end."

"Yes. As you say. Rather weird, isn't it? The flamboyant debauched Farquhar knockin' at the door — to get to a paralyzed old rich man who never heard of him. I wonder. Curious selection of people to call on by our Mr. Farquhar. A pretty lady of Paris who's married money and settled down on it; a rich old Welshman who's helpless on the edge of the grave. And neither of 'em sees Mr. Farquhar — accordin' to the evidence — neither will admit to knowin' anything about him. Very odd. Yes." Reggie turned large, melancholy eyes on Dubois. "Takes your fancy, what?"

"Name of a name!" Dubois rumbled. "It is fantasy pure. One sees such things in dreams. This has no more meaning."

"No. Not to us. But it happened. Therefore it had a cause. Mr. Lane Hudson lives all alone, what — except for servants?"

"That's right, sir," Bell nodded. "He's been a widower this long time. Only one child — daughter — and there's a grandson, quite a kid. Daughter's been married twice — first to a chap called Tracy, now to a Mr. Bernal — son by the first marriage, no other children."

"You have taken pains, Bell," Reggie smiled.

"Well, I got everything I could think of," said Bell, with gloomy satisfaction. "Not knowing what I wanted. And there's nothing I do want in what I've got. The Bernals come here fairly regular — Mr. and Mrs. Bernal, not the child — they've been staying with the old man just now. Usual autumn visit. They were

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there when Farquhar called, and after — didn't go away till last Wednesday; that's before Farquhar disappeared, you see, the day before. Farquhar didn't ask for the Bernals, and they didn't see him at all, the servants say. So there you are. The Bernals don't link up. That peters out, like everything else."

"Yes. Taken a lot of pains," Reggie murmured.

"What would you have?" Dubois shrugged. "To amass useless knowledge — it is our only method; one is condemned to it. Ours is a slow trade, my friend. We gather facts and facts and facts, and so, if we are lucky, eliminate ninety-nine of the hundred and use, at last, one."

"Yes. As you say," Reggie mumbled. "Where do the Bernals live, Bell?"

"In France, sir," said Bell, and Reggie opened his eyes.

"Aha!" Dubois made a grimace, and pointed a broad finger at him. "There, my friend. The one grand fact, is it not? In France! And Brittany is in France! But alas, my dear Fortune, they do not live in Brittany! Far from it. They live in the South, near Cannes; they have lived there — what do I know? — since they were married, *hein?*" He turned to Bell.

"That's right," Bell grunted. "Lady set up house there with her first husband. He had to live in the South of France — gassed in the war."

"You see?" Dubois smiled. "It is still the useless knowledge. And your vision of Brittany, my friend, it has no substance still."

"I wonder," Reggie mumbled, and sank deep in his chair.

He is, even without hope, conscientious. That night he examined another set of Farquhar's dirty linen, but neither in that nor the rest of the worthless luggage found any information. Prodded by him, Bell inquired of the Hudson household where the Bernals were to be found, but could obtain only the address of their Cannes villa, for they were reported to be going back by car. Dubois was persuaded to telegraph Cannes and received the reply that the Bernal villa was shut up; monsieur and madame were away motoring, and their boy at school — what school nobody knew.

"Then what?" Dubois summed up. "Nothing to do."

"Not tonight, no," Reggie yawned. "I'm going to bed."

"To dream of Brittany, *hein?*"

"I never dream," said Reggie, with indignation.

But he was waked in the night. He rubbed his eyes and looked up to see Dubois's large face above him. "Oh, my hat," he moaned. "What is it? Why won't it wait?"

"Courage, my friend. They have found him. At least, they think so. Some fishermen, going out yesterday evening, found a body on the rocks at what they call Granny's Cove. Come. The brave Bell wants you to see."

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"Bless him," Reggie groaned, and rolled out of bed. "What is life that one should seek it? I ask you." And, slipping clothes on him, swiftly he crooned, " 'Three fishers went sailin' out into the west, out into the west, as the sun went down' — and incredibly caught the incredible Farquhar."

"You are right," Dubois nodded. "Nothing clear, nothing sure. The more it changes, the more it is the same, this accursed case. It has no shape; there is no reason in it."

"Structure not yet determined. No," Reggie mumbled. "We're not bein' very clever. Ought to be able to describe the whole thing from available evidence of its existence. Same like inferrin' the age of reptiles from a fossil or two —"

"Name of a dog!" Dubois exclaimed. "When you are philosophic, my stomach turns over. What is in your mind?"

"Feelin' of impotence. Very uncomfortable," Reggie moaned.

In the mortuary Bell introduced them to a body covered by a sheet. "Here you are, sir." He stepped aside. "The clothes seem to be Farquhar's clothes all right. Sort of orange tweed and green flannel trousers. But I don't know about the man."

Reggie drew back the sheet from what was left of a face.

"*Saprelotte!*" Dubois rumbled. "The fish have bitten."

"Well, I leave it to you," said Bell thickly.

Under a sunlit breeze the sea was dancing bright, the mists flying inland when Reggie came out again.

He drove back to his hotel, and shaved and bathed and rang up the police station. Bell and Dubois arrived to find him in his room, eating with appetite grilled ham and buttered eggs.

"My envy; all my envy." Dubois pulled a face. "This is greatness. The English genius at the highest."

"Oh, no. No," Reggie protested. "Natural man. Well. The corpse is that of Mr. Farquhar as per invoice. Prominent teeth not impaired by activities of the lobsters. Some other contours still visible. The marmalade — thanks. Yes. Hair, colorin', size, and so forth agree. Mr. Farquhar's been in the sea three or four days. Correspondin' with date of disappearance. Cause of death, drowning. Severe contusions on head and body, inflicted before death. Possibly by blows, possibly by fall. Might have fallen from cliff; might have been dashed on rocks by sea. No certainty to be obtained. That's the medical evidence."

"You are talking!" Dubois exclaimed. "Flute! There we are again. Whatever arrives, it will mean nothing for us. Here is murder, suicide, accident — what you please."

"I wonder." Reggie began to peel an apple. "Anything in his pockets, Bell?"

"A lot of money, sir. Nothing else. The notes are all sodden, but it's a good wad, and some are fifties. Might

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be five or six hundred pounds. So he wasn't robbed."

"And then?" said Dubois. "It is not enough for all the jewels of Clotilde, but it is something in hand. Will you tell me what the devil he was doing at the door of this paralyzed millionaire? It means nothing, none of it."

"No. Still amassin' useless knowledge, as you were sayin'." Reggie gazed at Dubois with dreamy eyes. "I should say that's what we came here for. Don't seem the right place, does it? However. As we are here, let's try and get a little more before departure. Usin' the local talent. Bell — your fishermen — have they got any idea where a fellow would tumble into the sea to be washed up into Granny's Cove?"

"Ah." Bell was pleased. "I have been asking about that, sir. Supposing he got in from the land, they think it would be somewhere round by Shag Nose. That's a bit o' cliff west o' the town. I'm having men search round and inquire. But the scent's pretty cold by now."

"Yes. As you say," Reggie sighed. "Is it far?" he said, in a voice of fear.

"Matter of a mile or two."

"Oh, my Bell," Reggie groaned. He rose stiffly. "Come on."

Shag Nose is a headland from which dark cliffs fall sheer. Below them stretches seaward a ridge of rocks, which stand bare some way out at low tide, and in the flood make a turmoil of eddies and broken water.

The top of the headland is a flat of springy turf, in which are many tufts of thrift and cushions of gorse.

"Brr. It is bleak," Dubois complained. "Will you tell me why Farquhar should come here? He was not — how do you say? — a man for the great open spaces."

"Know the answer, don't you?" Reggie mumbled.

"Perfectly. He came to meet somebody in secret who desired to make an end of him. Very well. But who then? Not the paralyzed one. Not the son-in-law either. It is in evidence that the son-in-law was gone before Farquhar disappeared."

"That's right. I verified that," Bell grunted. "Bernal and his wife left the night before."

"There we are again," Dubois shrugged. "Nothing means anything. For certain, it is not a perfect alibi. They went by car; they could come back and not be seen. But it is an alibi that will stand unless you have luck, which you have not yet, my dear Bell."

"Not an easy case. No," Reggie murmured. "However. Possibilities not yet examined. Lyncombe's on the coast. Had you noticed that? I wonder if any little boat from France came in while Farquhar was still alive."

Dubois laughed. Dubois clapped him on the shoulder. "Magnificent! How you are resolute, my friend. Always the great idea! A boat from Brittany, *hein?* That would solve everything. The good Farquhar was so kind as to come here and meet it

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and be killed by the brave Bretons. And the paralyzed millionaire, he was merely a diversion to pass the time."

"Yes. We are not amused," Reggie moaned. "You're in such a hurry. Bell, what's the local talent say about the tide? When was high water on the night Farquhar disappeared?"

"Not till the early morning, sir. Tide was going out from about three in the afternoon onwards."

"I see. At dusk and after, that reef o' rocks would be comin' out of the water. Assumin' he went over the cliff in the dark or twilight, he'd fall on the rocks."

"That's right. Of course he might bounce into the sea. But I've got a man or two down there searching the shore and the cliffside."

"Good man." Reggie smiled, and wandered away to the cliff edge.

"Yes. It is most correct," Dubois shrugged. "I should do it, I avow. But also I should expect nothing, nothing. After all, we are late. We arrive late at everything."

Reggie turned and stared at him. "I know. That's what I'm afraid of," he mumbled.

He wandered to and fro about the ground near the cliff edge, and found nothing which satisfied him, and at last lay down on his stomach where a jutting of the headland gave him a view of the cliffs on either side.

Two men scrambled about over the rocks below, scanning the cliff face, prying into every crevice they could reach . . . one of them vanished under an overhanging ledge, appeared again, working round it, was lost in a cleft . . . when he came out he had something in his hand.

"Name of a pipe!" Dubois rumbled. "Is it possible we have luck at last?"

"No." Reggie stood up. "Won't be luck, whatever it is. Reward of virtue. Bell's infinite capacity for takin' pains."

A breathless policeman reached the top of the cliff, and held out a sodden book. "That's the only perishing thing there is down there, sir," he panted. "Not a trace else."

Bell gave it to Reggie. It was a sketchbook of the size to slide into a man's pocket. The first leaf bore, in a flamboyant scrawl, the name Derek Farquhar.

"Ah. That fixes it, then," said Bell. "He did go over this cliff, and his sketchbook came out of his pocket as he bounced on the ledges."

"Very well," Dubois shrugged. "We know now as much as we guessed. Which means nothing."

Reggie sat down and began to separate the book's wet pages.

Farquhar had drawn, in pencil, notes rather than sketches at first, scraps of face and figure and scene which took his unholy fancy, a drunken girl, a nasty stage dance, variations of impropriety. Then came some parades of men and women bathing, not less unpleasant, but more studied. "Aha! Here is something seen at least," said Dubois.

"Yes, I think so," Reggie murmured, and turned the page.

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The next sketch showed children dancing — small boys and girls. Some touch of cruelty was in the drawing — they were made to look ungainly — but it had power; it gave them an intensity of frail life which was at once pathetic and grotesque. They danced round a giant statue — a block in which the shape of a woman was burlesqued, hideously fat and thin, with a flat, foolish face. There were no clothes on it, but rough lines which might be girdle and necklace.

"What the devil!" Dubois exclaimed. "This is an oddity. He discovers he had a talent, the animal."

Reggie did not answer. For a moment more he gazed at the children and the statue, and he shivered, then he turned the other pages of the book. There were some notes of faces, then several satires on the respectability of Lyncombe — the sea front, with nymphs in Bath chairs propelled by satyrs and satyrs propelled by nymphs. He turned back to the dancing children and the giant female statue, and stared at it, and his round face was pale. "Yes. Farquhar had talent," he said. "Played the devil with it all his life. And yet it works on the other side. What's the quickest way to Brittany? London and then Paris by air. Come on."

Dubois swore by a paper bag and caught him up. "What, then? How do you find your Brittany again in this?"

"The statue," Reggie snapped. "Sort of statue you see in Brittany. Nowhere else. He didn't invent that out of his dirty mind. He'd seen it. It meant something to him. I should say he'd seen the children too."

"You go beyond me," said Dubois. "Well, it is not the first time. A statue in Brittany, eh? You mean the old things they have among the standing stones and the menhirs and dolmens. A primitive goddess. The devil! I do not see our Farquhar interested in antiquities. But it is the more striking that he studied her. I give you that. And the children? I will swear he was not a lover of children."

"No. He wasn't. That came out in the drawing. Not a nice man. It pleased him to think of children dancin' round the barbarous female."

"I believe you," said Dubois. "The devil was in that drawing."

"Yes. Devilish feelin'. Yes. And yet it's going to help. Because the degenerate fellow had talent. Not wholly a bad world."

"Optimist. Be it so. But what can you make the drawing mean, then?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," Reggie mumbled. "Place of child life in the career of the late Farquhar very obscure. Only trace yet discovered, the Bernals have a child. No inference justified. I'm going to Brittany. I'm goin' to look for traces round that statue. And meanwhile — Bell has to find out if a French boat has been in to Lyncombe — you'd better set your people findin' the Bernals — with child. Have the Webers got a child?"

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"Ah, no." Dubois laughed. "The beautiful Clotilde, she is not that type."

"Pity. However. You might let me have a look at the Webers as I go through Paris."

"With all my heart," said Dubois. "You understand, my friend, you command me. I see nothing, nothing, nothing at all, but I put myself in your hand." He made a grimace. "In fact, there is nothing else to do. It is an affair for inspiration. I never had any."

"Nor me, no." Reggie was indignant. "My only aunt! Inspired! I am not! I believe in evidence. You experts are so superior."

Next morning they sat in the *salon* of the Webers. It was overwhelming with the worst magnificence of the Second Empire — mirrors and gilding, marble and malachite and lapis lazuli. But the Webers, entering affectionately arm in arm, were only magnificent in their opulent proportions. Clotilde, a dark full-blown creature, had nothing more than powder on her face, no jewels but a string of pearls, and the exuberance of her shape was modified by a simple black dress. Weber's clumsy bulk was all in black too.

They welcomed Dubois with open arms; they talked together. What had he to tell them? They had heard that the cursed Farquhar had been discovered dead in England — it was staggering; had anything been found of the jewels?

Nothing, in effect, Dubois told them. Only, Farquhar had more money than such an animal ought to have. It was a pity.

Dubois regretted — but what to do? They must admit one had been quick, very quick, to trace Farquhar. They would certainly compliment his *confrère* from England — that produced perfunctory bows. What the English police asked — and they were right — it was could one learn anything of who had worked with Farquhar, why had he come to the apartment Weber?

The Webers were contemptuous: What use to ask such a question? One had not an acquaintance with thieves. As to why he came, why he picked out them to rob — a thief must go where there was something to steal — and they — well, one was known a little.

"For sure. Everyone knows monsieur — and madame." Dubois bowed. "But I seek something more."

They stormed. It was not to be supposed they should know anything of such a down-at-heel.

"Oh, no. No," said Reggie quickly. "But in the world of business" — he looked at Weber — "in the world of the theatre" — he looked at Clotilde — "the fellow might have crossed your path, what?"

That was soothing. They agreed the thing was possible.

Under plaintive looks from Reggie, Dubois broke it off with a brusque departure. When they were outside — "Well, you have met them!" Dubois shrugged. "And if they are

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anything which is not ordinary I did not see it."

Reggie gazed at him with round reproachful eyes. "They were in mourning," he moaned. "You never told me that. Were they in mourning when you saw 'em before?"

"But yes," Dubois frowned. "Yes, certainly. What is the matter? Did you think they had put on mourning for the animal Farquhar?"

"My dear chap! Oh, my dear chap," Reggie sighed. "Find out why they are in mourning. Quietly. Goodbye. Meet you at the station."

The night express to Nantes and Quimper drew out of Paris. They ate a grim and taciturn dinner. They went back to the sleeping car and shut themselves in Reggie's compartment. "Well, I have done my work," said Dubois. "The Webers are in mourning for their nephew. A child of ten, whom Weber would have made his heir — his sister's son."

"A child," Reggie murmured. "How did he die?"

"It was not in Brittany, my friend," Dubois grinned. "Besides it is not mysterious. He died at Fontainebleau, in August, of diphtheria. They had the best doctors of Paris. There you are again. It means nothing."

"I wonder," Reggie mumbled. "Any news of the Bernals?"

"It appears they have passed through Touraine. If it is they, there was no child with them. Have no fear, they are watched for. One does not disappear in France."

"You think not? Well, well. Remains the Bernal child. Not yet known to be dead. Of diphtheria or otherwise! I did a job o' work too. Talked to old Huet at the Institute. You know — the prehistoric man. He says Farquhar's goddess is the Woman of Sarn. Recognized her at once. She stands on about the last western hill in France. Weird sort o' place, Huet says. And he can't imagine why Farquhar thought of children dancin' round her. The people are taught she's of the devil."

"But you go on to see her?" Dubois made a grimace. "The fixed idea."

"No. Rational inference. Farquhar thought of her with children. And there's a child dead — and another child we can't find — belongin' to the people linked with Farquhar. I go on."

"To the land's end — to the end of the world — and beyond. For your faith in yourself. My dear Fortune, you are sublime. Well, I follow you. Poor old Dubois. Sancho Panza to your Don Quixote, *hein?*"

They came out of the train to a morning of soft sunshine and mellow ocean air. The twin spires of Quimper rose bright among their minarets. Dubois bustled away from breakfast to see officials. "Don Quixote is a law to himself, but Sancho had better be correct, my friend."

"Yes, rather, " Reggie mumbled, from a mouth full of honey. "Conciliate the authorities."

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"Always the optimist, my Quixote."

"No. No. Only careful. Don't tell 'em anything."

"Name of a name!" Dubois exploded. "That is necessary, that warning. I have so much to tell!"

In an hour, they were driving away from Quimper, up over high moorland of heather and gorse and down again to a golden bay and a fishing village of many boats, then on westward, with glimpses of sea on either hand. There was never a tree, only, here and there rose giant stones.

The car stopped, the driver turned in his seat and pointed, and said he could drive no nearer, but that was the Woman of Sarn. "She is lonely," Dubois shrugged. "There is no village near, my lad?"

"There is Sarn." The driver pointed towards the southern sea. "But it is nothing."

Reggie plodded away through the heather. "Well, this is hopeful, is it not?" Dubois caught him up. "When we find her, what have we found? An idol in the desert. But you will go on to the end, my Quixote. Forward, then."

They came to the statue, and stood, for its crude head rose high above theirs, looking up at it. "And we have found it, one must avow," Dubois shrugged. "This is the lady Farquhar drew, devil a doubt. But, *saperlipopette*, she is worse here than on paper. She is real; she is a brute — all that there is of the beast in woman, emerging from the shapeless earth."

"Inhuman and horrid human, yes," Reggie murmured. "Cruelty of life. Yes. He knew about that, the fellow who made her, poor beggar. So did Farquhar."

"I believe it! But do you ask me to believe little children come and dance round this horror? Ah, no!"

"Oh, no. No. That never happened. Not in our time. Point of interest is, Farquhar thought it fittin' they should. Very interestin' point." Reggie gave another look at the statue, and walked on towards the highest point of the moor.

From that he could see the tiny village of Sarn, huddled in a cove, the line of dark cliff, a long rampart against the Atlantic. Below the cliff top he made out a white house, of some size, which seemed to stand alone.

His face had a dreamy placidity as he came back to Dubois. "Well, well. Not altogether desert," he murmured. "Something quite residential over there. Let's wander."

They struck southward towards the sea. As they approached the white house, they saw that it was of modern pattern — concrete, in simple proportions, with more window than wall.

"Of the new ugliness, eh?" said Dubois, whose taste is for elaboration in all things. "All the last fads. It should be a sanatorium, not a house."

They came close above the house. It stood in a large walled enclosure, within which was a trim garden, but most of the space was taken by a paved yard with a roofed platform like a bandstand in the middle.

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Not a creature was to be seen. The acreage of window blazed blank.

"The band is not playing." Dubois made a grimace. "It is not the season."

Reggie did not answer. His eyes puckered to stare at a window within which the sun glinted on something of brass. He made a little inarticulate sound, and walked on, keeping above the house. But they saw no one, no sign of life, till they were close to the cliff edge.

Then a cove opened below them in a gleaming stretch of white shell sand, and on the sand children were playing: some of them at a happy-go-lucky game of rounders, some building castles, some tumbling over each other like puppies. On a rock sat, in placid guard over them, a man who had the black pointed beard, the heavy black brows, which Farquhar had sketched on his menu. But these Mephistophelean decorations did not display the leer and sneer of Farquhar's drawing. The owner watched the children with a grave and kindly attention which seemed to be interested in everyone. He called to them cheerily, and had gay answers. He laughed jovial satisfaction at their laughter.

Reggie took Dubois's arm and walked him away. "Ah, my poor friend!" Dubois rumbled chuckles. "There we are at last. We arrive. We have the brute goddess, we have the children, we have even the devil of our Farquhar. And behold! He is a genial paternal soul, and all the children love him."

"Yes. Funny, isn't it?" Reggie snapped. "Dam' funny. Did you say the end? Then God forgive us. Which He wouldn't. He would not!"

Dubois gave him a queer look — something of derision, something of awe, and a good deal of doubt. "When you talk like that" — a shrug, a wave of the hands — "it is outside reason, is it not? An inspiration of faith."

"Faith that the world is reasonable. That's all," Reggie snarled. "Come on down to this village."

The huddled cottages of Sarn were already in sight. Then odors, a complex of stale fish and the filth of beast and man, could be smelled. Women clattered in sabots and labored. Men lounged against the wall above the mess of the beach. A few small and ancient boats lay at anchor in the cove, and one of a larger size, and better condition, with a motor.

They found a dirty *estaminet* and obtained from the landlord a bottle of nameless red wine.

The landlord was slow of speech, and a pessimist. Even with several little glasses of Calvados inside him he would talk only of the hardness of life and the poverty of Sarn and the curse upon the modern sardine. Reggie agreed that life was dear and life was difficult, but, after all, they had still their good boats at Sarn — motorboats, indeed. The landlord denied it with gloomy vehemence: motors — not one — only in the *Badebec*, and that was no fishing boat, that one. It was M. David's.

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"Is it so?" Reggie yawned, and lit his pipe. He gazed dreamily down the village street to the hideous little church. From that — under a patched umbrella, to keep off the wind, which was high, or the sun, which was grown faint — came a fat and shabby *curé*. "Well, better luck, my friend," Reggie murmured, left Dubois to pay.

He met the *curé* by the church gate. Was it permitted to visit that interesting church? Certainly, it was permitted, but monseiur would find nothing of interest — it was new; it was, alas, a poor place.

The *curé* was right — it was new; it was garish, it was mean. He showed it to Reggie with an affecting simplicity of diffident pride, and Reggie was attentive. Reggie praised the care with which it was kept. "You are kind, sir," the *curé* beamed. "You are just. In fact they are admirably pious, my poor people, but poor — poor."

"You will permit the stranger —" Reggie slipped a note into his hand.

"Ah, monsieur! You are generous. It will be rewarded, please God."

"It is nothing," said Reggie quickly. "Do not think of it." They passed out of the church. "I suppose this is almost the last place in France?"

"Sometimes I think we are forgotten," the *curé* agreed. "Yes, almost the last. Certainly we are all poor folk. There is only M. David, who is sometimes good to us."

"A visitor?" Reggie said.

"Ah, no. He lives here. The Maison des Iles, you know. No? It is a school for young children — a school of luxury. He is a good man, M. David. Sometimes he will take, for almost a nothing, children who are weakly, and in a little while he has them as strong as the best. I have seen miracles. To be sure it is the best air in the world, here at Sarn. But he is a very good man. He calls his school 'of the islands' because of the islands out there" — the *curé* pointed to what looked like a reef of rocks. "My poor people call them the islands of the blessed. It is not good religion, but they used to think the souls of the innocent went there. Yes, the Maison des Iles, his school is. But you should see it, sir. The children are charming."

"If I had time ——" said Reggie, and said goodbye.

Dubois was at the gate. Dubois took his arm and marched him off. "My friend, almost thou persuadest me ——" He spoke into Reggie's ear. "Guess what I have found, will you? That motor yacht, the yacht of M. David, she was away a week ten days ago. And M. David on board. You see? It is possible she went over to England. A guess, yes, a chance, but one must avow, it fits devilish well, if one can make it fit. A connection with all your fantasy — M. David over in England when Farquhar was drowned. Is it possible we arrive at last?"

"Yes, it could be. Guess what I've heard. M. David keeps school. That wasn't a bandstand. Open-air classroom. M. David is a very good man,

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and he uses his beautiful school to cure the children of the poor. He does miracles. The *curé* has seen 'em."

"The devil!" said Dubois. "That does not fit at all. But a priest would see miracles. It is his trade."

"Oh, no. No. Not unless they happen," Reggie murmured.

"My friend, you believe more than any man I ever knew," Dubois rumbled. "Come, I must know more of this David. The sooner we are back at Quimper the better."

"Yes. That is indicated. Quimper and telephone." He checked a moment, and gazed anguish at Dubois. "Oh, my hat, how I hate telephones."

Dubois has not that old-fashioned weakness. Dubois, it is beyond doubt, enjoyed the last hours of that afternoon, shut into privacy at the post office with its best telephone, stirring up London and Paris and half of France till sweat dripped from his big face.

When he came into Reggie's room at the hotel it was already past dinner time. Reggie lay on his bed, languid from a bath. "My dear old thing," he moaned sympathy. "What a battle! You must have lost pounds."

"So much the better," Dubois chuckled. "And also I have results. Listen. First, I praise the good Bell. He has it that a French boat — cutter rig with motor — was seen by fishermen in the bay off Lyncombe last week. They watched her, because they had suspicions she was poaching their lobsters and crabs, which they unaccountably believe is the habit of our honest French fishermen. She was lying in the bay the night of Tuesday — you see, the night that Farquhar disappeared. In the morning she was gone. They are not sure of the name, but they thought it was *Badboy*. That is near enough to *Badebec*, *hein?* In fact, myself, I do not understand the name *Badebec*."

"Lady in Rabelais," Reggie murmured. "Rather interestin'. Shows the breadth of M. David's taste."

"Aha. Very well. Here is a good deal for M. David to explain. Second, M. David himself. He is known; there is nothing against him. In fact, he is like you, a man of science, a biologist, a doctor. He was brilliant as a student, which was about the same time that Farquhar studied art — and other things — in the Quartier Latin. David had no money. He served in hospitals for children; he set up his school here — a school for delicate children — four years ago. Its record is very good. He has medical inspection by a doctor from Quimper each month. But, third, Weber's nephew was at this school till July. He went home to Paris, they went out to Fontainebleau, and — piff!" Dubois snapped his fingers. "He is dead like that. There is no doubt it was diphtheria."

"I'd like a medical report," Reggie murmured.

"I have asked for it. However — the doctors are above suspicion, my friend. And now, fourth — the Bernals are found. They are at Dijon. They have been asked what has become of their dear little boy, and,

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they reply, he is at school in Brittany. At the school of M. David.

"Yes. He would be. I see."

"Name of a name! I think you have always seen everything."

"Oh, no. No. Don't see it now," Reggie mumbled. "However, we're workin' it out. You've done wonderfully."

"Not so bad." Dubois smiled. "My genius is for action."

"Yes. Splendid. Yes. Mine isn't. I just had a look at the museum."

"My dear friend," Dubois condescended. "Why not? After all, the affair is now for me."

"Thanks, yes. Interestin' museum. Found a good man on the local legends there. Told me the Woman of Sarn used to have children sacrificed to her. That'll be what Farquhar had in his nice head. Though M. David is so good to children."

"Aha. It explains, and it does not explain," Dubois said. "In spite of you, Mr. David remains an enigma. Let poor old Dubois try. I have all these people under observation — the Webers, the Bernals — they cannot escape me now. And there are good men gone out to watch over M. David in his Maison des Iles. Tomorrow we will go and talk to him."

"Pleasure," Reggie murmured.

When they drove out to Sarn in the morning, a second car followed them. In a blaze of hot sunshine they started, but they had not gone far before a mist of rain spread in from the sea, and by the time they reached the Maison des Iles they seemed to be in the clouds.

"An omen, *hein?*" Dubois made a grimace. "At least it may be inconvenient — if he is alarmed; if he wishes to play tricks. We have no luck in this affair. But courage, my friend. Poor old Dubois, he is not without resource."

Their car entered the walled enclosure of the Maison des Iles, the second stopped outside. When Dubois sent in his card to M. David, they were shown to a pleasant waiting-room, and had not long to wait.

David was dressed with a careless neatness. He was well-groomed and perfectly at ease. His full red lips smiled; his dark eyes quizzed them. "What a misery of a morning you have found, gentlemen. I apologize for my ocean. M. Dubois?"

"Of the Sûreté." Dubois bowed. "And M. Fortune, my distinguished *confrère* from England."

David was enchanted. And what could he do for them?

"We make some little inquiries. First, you have here a boy — Tracy, the son of Mme. Bernal. He is in good health?"

"Of the best." David lifted his black brows. "You will permit me to know why you ask."

"Because another boy who was here is dead. The little nephew of M. Weber. You remember him?"

"Very well. He was a charming child. I regret infinitely. But you are without doubt aware that he fell

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ill on the holidays. It was a tragedy for his family. But the cause is not here. We have had no illness, no infection at all. I recommend you to Dr. Lannion, at Quimper. He is our medical inspector."

"Yes. So I've heard," Reggie murmured. "Have you had other cases of children who went home for the holidays and died?"

"It is an atrocious question!" David cried.

"But you are not quite sure of the answer?" said Dubois.

"If that is an insinuation, I protest," David frowned. "I have nothing to conceal, sir. It is impossible, that must be clear, I should know what has become of every child who has left my school. But, I tell you frankly, I do not recall any death but that of the little nephew of Weber."

"Very well. Then you can have no objection that my assistant should examine your records," said Dubois.

"Not the least in the world. I am at your orders." David bowed. "Permit me, I will go and get out the books," and he went briskly.

"Now if we had luck he would try to run away," Dubois rumbled. "But do not expect it."

And David did not run away. He came back and took them to his office, and there Dubois's man was set to work.

"You wish to assist?" David asked.

"No, thanks. No," Reggie murmured. "I'd like to look at your school."

"An inspection!" David smiled. "I shall be delighted. I dare to hope for the approval of a man of science so eminent."

They inspected dormitories and dining-room and kitchen, classrooms and workshop and laboratory. M. David was expansive and enthusiastic, yet modest. Either he was an accomplished actor, or he had a deep interest in school hygiene, and his arrangements were beyond suspicion. In the laboratory Reggie lingered. "It is elementary," David apologized. "But what would you have? Some general science, that is all they can do, my little ones: botany for the most part, as you see, a trifle of chemistry to amuse them."

"Yes. Quite sound. Yes. I'd like to see the other laboratory."

"What?" David stared. "There is only this."

"Oh, no. Another one with a big microscope," Reggie murmured. "North side of the house."

"Oh, la, la," David laughed. "You have paid some attention to my poor house. I am flattered. You mean my own den, where I play with marine biology still. Certainly you shall see it. But a little moment, I must get the key. You will understand. One must keep one's good microscope locked up. These imps, they play everywhere." He hurried out.

"*Bigre!* How the devil did you know there was another laboratory?" said Dubois.

"Saw the microscope yesterday," Reggie mumbled.

"Name of a dog! Is there anything

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you do not see?" Dubois complained. "Well, if we have any luck he has run away this time."

They waited some long while, and Dubois's face was flattened against the window to peer through the rain at the man on watch. But David had not run away; he came back at last, and apologized for some delay with a fool of a master, heaven give him patience!

He took them briskly to the other laboratory, his den.

It was not pretentious. There were some shelves of bottles, and a bench with a sink, and a glass cupboard which stood open and empty. On the broad table in the window was a microscope of high power, and some odds and ends.

Reggie glanced at the bottles of chemicals and came to the microscope. "I play at what I worked at. That is middle age," David smiled. "Here is something a little interesting." He slipped a slide into the microscope and invited Reggie to look.

"Oh, yes. One of the diatoms. Pretty one," Reggie murmured, and was shown some more. "Thanks very much." A glance set Dubois in a hurry to go. David was affably disappointed. He had hoped they would lunch with him. The gentleman with the records could hardly have finished his investigations. He desired an investigation the most complete.

"I will leave him here," Dubois snapped, and they got away. "Nothing, my friend?" Dubois muttered.

"No. That was the point," Reggie said. "'When they got there the cupboard was bare.'"

As their car passed the gate, a man signaled to them out of the rain. They stopped just beyond sight of the house, and he joined them. "Bouvier has held someone," he panted. "A man with a sack." They got out of the car.

Through the blinding rain clouds they came to the back of the house, and, on the way up to the cliffs, found Bouvier with his hand on the collar of a sullen, stupefied Breton. A sack lay on the ground at their feet.

"He says it is only rubbish," Bouvier said, "and he was taking it to throw into the sea, where they throw their waste. But I kept him."

"Good. Let us see." Dubois pulled the sack open. "The devil, it is nothing but broken glass!"

Reggie grasped the hand that was going to turn it over. "No, you mustn't do that," he said sharply. "Risky."

"Why? What then? It is broken glass and bits of jelly."

"Yes. As you say. Broken glass and bits of jelly. However." Over Reggie's wet face came a slow benign smile. "Just what we wanted. Contents of cupboard which was bare. I'll have to do some work on this. I'm going to the hospital. You'd better collect David — in the other car. Goodbye."

Twenty-four hours later, he came into a grim room of a *gendarmerie* at Quimper. There Dubois and David

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sat with a table between them, and neither man was a pleasant sight. David's florid color was gone, he had become untidy, he sagged in his chair, unable to hide fatigue and pain. Dubois also was disheveled, and his eyes had sunk and grown small, but the big face wore a look of hungry cruelty. He turned to Reggie. "Aha. Here you are at last. And what do you tell M. David?"

"Well, we'll have a little demonstration." Reggie set down a box on the table and took from it a microscope. "Not such a fine instrument as yours, M. David, but it will do." He adjusted a slide. "You showed me some beautiful marine diatoms in your laboratory. Let me show you this. Also from your laboratory. From the sackful of stuff you tried to throw into the sea."

David dragged himself up, and looked and stared at him, and dropped back in his chair.

"Oh, that's not all, no." Reggie changed the slide. "Try this one."

Again, and more wearily, David looked. He sat down again. His full lips curled back to show his teeth in a grin. "And then?" he said.

"What have you?" Dubois came to the microscope. "Little chains of dots, eh?" Reggie put back the first slide. "And rods with dots at the end."

"Not bad for a layman, is it, M. David?" Reggie murmured. "Streptococcus pyogenes, and the diphtheria bacillus. I've got some more ——"

"Indeed?" David sneered.

"Oh, yes. But these will do. Pyogenes was found in poor little Weber. Very efficient and scientific murder."

"And the others?" Dubois thundered. "The other children who went home for their holidays and died. Two, three, four, is it, David?"

David laughed. "What does it matter? Yes, there are others who have gone to the isles of the blessed. But, also, there are many who have been made well and strong. I mock at you."

"You have cause, Herod," Dubois cried. "You have grown rich on the murder of children. But it is we who laugh last. We deliver you to justice now."

"Justice! Ah, yes, you believe that." David laughed again. "You are primitive, you are barbarous. Me, I am rational, I am a man of science. I sacrifice one life that a dozen may live well and happy. These who stand in the way of the rich, their deaths are paid for, and with the money I heal many. What, if life is valuable, is not this wisdom and justice? Let one die to save many — it is in all the religions, that. But no one believes his religions now. I — I believe in man. Well, I am before my time. But some day the world will be all Davids. With me it is finished."

"Not yet, name of God!" Dubois growled.

"Oh, yes, my friend. I am sick to death already. I have made sure of that." He waved his hand at Reggie. "You will not save me —

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no, not even you, my clever *confrère*. Good night! Go chase the Weber and the Bernal and the rest. David, he is gone into the infinite." He fell back, a hand to his head.

Reggie went to him, and looked close and felt at him. "Better take him away," he pronounced. "Hospital, under observation."

Dubois gave the orders. . . . "Play acting, my friend," he shrugged.

"Oh, no. No. That kind of man. Logical and drastic. He's ill all right. There was the diplococcus of meningitis in his collection. Might be that." And it was.

Ten days afterwards Dubois came to London with Reggie and gave Lomas a lecture on the case. "I am desolated that I cannot offer you anyone to hang, my friend. But what can one do? The wretched Farquhar — I have no doubt he was murdered between David and Bernal. But there is no evidence. And, after all, David, he is dead, and we have Bernal for conspiracy to murder his stepson. That will do. It was, in fact, a case profoundly simple, like all the great crimes. To make a trade of arranging the deaths of unwanted children, that is very old. The distinction of David was to organize it scientifically, that is all. The child who was an heir to fortune, with a greedy one waiting to succeed, that was the child for him. Weber's nephew stood in the way of the beautiful Clotilde to Weber's fortune. Mrs. Bernal's little boy was in the way of her second husband to the fortune of her father, the old millionaire. And the others! Well, here is a beautiful modern school for delicate children, nine out of ten of them thrive marvelously. But, for the tenth, there is David's bacteriological laboratory, and a killing disease to take home with him when he goes for his holidays. Always at home, they die; always a disease of infection they could pick up anywhere. *Bigre!* It was a work of genius. And it would have gone on forever but that this worthless Farquhar blunders into Brittany upon it, and begins to blackmail the beautiful Clotilde, the Bernal. Clotilde pays with her jewels, and has to pretend a robbery. Bernal will not pay — cannot, perhaps. Farquhar approaches the old grandfather, and Bernal calls in David, and the blackmailer is killed.

"The oldest story in the world. Rascals fall out, justice comes in. There is your angel of justice." He bowed to Reggie. "Dear master. You have shown me the way. Well, I am content to serve. Does he serve badly, poor old Dubois?"

"Oh, no. No. Brilliant," Reggie murmured. "Queer case, though. David wanted to be a god. Make lives to his desire. And he did. Then this fellow, who never wanted to be anything but a beast, blows in and beats him. Queer world. And David might have been a kindly, human fellow, if he hadn't had power. Dangerous stuff, science. Lots of us not fit for it."

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A year or so ago — perhaps it was longer than that — someone conducted an interesting survey among American "slick" magazines to determine which fiction writers had been published most often during the preceding year. It came as no surprise to learn that the names of John and Ward Hawkins were among the top ten of popular American magazine writers. In all probability this successful collaboration has maintained their high position since that survey was made, if not actually improved on their original rating. We welcome John and Ward Hawkins's first appearance in EQMM and hope to have more of their stories in the future.

CHEAT FOR ME

by JOHN and WARD HAWKINS

SHE SAT IN THE VISITOR'S CHAIR. The three men who shared the small office had a name for the battered piece of furniture they pushed from desk to desk. They called it the hell seat. When someone came to sit in it the two plainclothes men who were not involved usually found something to do in another part of the Harbor Precinct Station House. Dusen and Abbott had done that today, bolting hurriedly, jostling each other in their haste to get through the door and away.

Dom McCarthy was alone with her.

"You arrested him," she said.

"Your brother. I arrested him."

He'd had two years of this. He'd lost count of the number of people who had come to sit in that chair and speak for a brother, a husband, a daughter, a son. The things they said, the lies they told, the excuses they made were always the same. "He's good — he couldn't . . ." You sat there and listened. You saw the quick, the raw despair, and it was as embarrassing as nakedness.

The girl, Mary Harlow, was talking now, her head bent, her hair as bright as sunlight in the room. She wore a tailored suit, well made, well pressed, but a little heavy for this spring season. The toe of one pump was scuffed. She wore an engagement ring. The stone was not big, but clear and unflawed, and the best within the financial reach of Dom McCarthy, detective, second grade. He wondered if she would give it back.

"David didn't steal that car," she said.

"He was sitting in it," McCarthy said.

He turned his hand palm down upon the desk to hide the blackened area where the skin was gone. He'd lost that hide on the pavement of the

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alley, along with the knee of the trousers of his second-best suit. There were purple welts on his shins, left there by David Harlow's shoes. He did not mention these.

"He tried to run, Mary."

"Of course," she said. "You frightened him."

Dom was quiet then. He watched her hand open and close upon a wadded scrap of printed cloth. He had given her that handkerchief. Mary was saying David had always wanted a hot rod, that he'd dreamed of nothing else. "With my pay check, that's like wanting the moon." David had seen the cut-down blue convertible parked in the shadows of the alley wall and had climbed in to sit behind the wheel and pretend it was his. The rest had just happened. He'd seen Dom — not as Dom, of course, but as a big man who'd walked up to examine the license plate. He'd been afraid because — well, because he'd been afraid.

"Dom, it's the truth," she said. "It is."

Run of the mill. Somehow those who sat in the hell seat always got around to that. They believed, and so should you. They didn't see you were only a workman doing a job and that facts were the tools of your trade. Dom McCarthy looked at the typed report in the basket on the corner of his desk. Reading that to Mary would stiffen her fierce defense. She was saying again that David was innocent, that he'd run because he'd been afraid.

Dom wondered why her thinking had stopped there. A thief would be more apt to run than an innocent man. And the person who had stolen the car and used it in a poorly planned and badly botched holdup would certainly have been eager to be gone. Dom pressed his sore hand upon the desk and listened to Mary Harlow's voice. He heard clearly the unspoken plea that rang through every word she said:

"Release David. Send my brother home."

"If it was just the car," he said. "But it's bigger than that."

"Dom, there must be something —"

And there it was again: *Send my brother home!*

"An arrest isn't proof of guilt," he said.

She looked down. She tucked her handkerchief into her purse and closed it. She was getting ready to go. No. She was already gone, retreating behind a wall of hurt and bewilderment. David was in jail and Dom would not unlock the door.

"If you love me, Dom."

"Don't hit below the belt," he said.

"What, Dom? What do you mean?"

"Nothing," he said. "I'll do what I can. I'll see you tonight."

"Please come early," she said.

He watched her go down the room and through the door, her head up. Her stride was long and free. The office seemed darker after she had gone, a shabby, crowded place, heavy with the reek of Dusen's cigars. Dom Mc-

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Carthy looked at the typed report, signed but not yet turned in. Twenty lines, but three weary hours had gone into the writing of them. He wondered if he'd said too much, described too much, in trying for a complete objectivity. He could do it over and leave out the fight. It hadn't been much — only the frantic kicking and clawing of a boy desperately anxious to escape. But the name would ring a bell in the Lieutenant's memory. Harlow? — David Harlow? He'd check with Dusen or Abbott, and then read into the report all that had been left out.

"Rough," Dusen said. "Rougher than a cob."

Jock Dusen was back at his desk. He was a fat, untidy man, two years past retirement age and still around.

"I had to pinch my brother's kid once," he said.

"What'd your brother do?"

"Quit speakin' to me for five years." Jock put his cigar in an ash tray and poked through the mess of papers on his desk. "They ran a line-up while you were talking to the girl. Four from the tank, and young Harlow. They had the service station attendant and another witness up there." Jock scowled at an ancient circular. "Both of 'em picked the kid."

"Thanks for telling me," McCarthy said.

He left the office for the hall, the typed sheet in his hand. He was a lanky, freckled man, tall but spare. His hair was near-red, his eyes near-green. His report didn't matter now. The alley fight and the capture were just footnotes to this latest development: the identification of David Harlow — 17, sullen mouth, blond hair, blue eyes — as the driver of the stolen car, as the would-be gunman who'd pointed a cheap and shiny .38 at a service station attendant.

McCarthy tossed the typed sheet in a basket on the sergeant's desk.

"I hear he's your gal's brother," the sergeant said.

"That's right."

"If you want somebody else to handle the rest of it, Dom, I can talk to the lieutenant."

"Don't bother," McCarthy said.

He took a wad of slips from the wall box that bore his name and headed for the street. He had a look inside himself as he turned east; the corners of his mouth pulled down. He'd thought of changing his report — he hadn't, but he'd considered it. He'd been right on the edge, reaching for a fresh sheet of paper, when Jock walked in. Now there was no way of knowing what he would have finally done. But he had considered it. Because David was Mary's brother, because Mary had said, "If you love me, Dom." And what kind of cop did that make him?

He lugged that question with him all day long. It nagged at him as he stood in the mouth of the alley connecting Delance and Dock Streets. Last night he'd passed this way. He'd caught a glimpse of the cut-down convertible parked crookedly and badly

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in a patch of inky shadow against the wall. He'd read the last three numbers on the license plate. Just numbers, until he'd fished the day's information sheet — missing persons, stolen cars — out of his pocket and found them halfway down the list: ". . . '40 convertible, dark blue, black top . . ." He'd gone in to check the plate. He'd heard movement in the car.

He'd yelled. Sometimes that worked. Sometimes a harsh command would hold a man still until you could get to him. Dom McCarthy had rounded the front fender, moving fast. As he reached for the handle, the door of the convertible had opened, suddenly and violently, had been driven open by the straightening of hard-braced legs. Dom McCarthy had been slapped backward. He'd lost the knee of his trousers, the skin of his palm on the alley pavement. He'd seen a dark shape bolting toward Dock Street — the white disk of a face, a boy's face.

He'd come up, running hard, running wide to force the boy close to the alley wall. He'd stiff-armed him, finally, into a clutter of cans and boxes. He'd gone in after him, in and down, and had been savagely kicked for his trouble before he'd found the boy's wrist and elbow and levered his arm up in a hammer lock. The boy had whimpered, close to tears, and Dom had yanked him up to face the flashlight of the prowl-car.

"Dom," the boy said. "I didn't do anything. Honest."

Dom McCarthy wondered what he would have done if the prowl-car men had been less prompt. He had considered changing, softening his report. Did that mean he might have heard Dave's story out and sent him home if the two of them had been alone?

"Quit it," Dom McCarthy told himself.

He had work to do. The slips in his pocket listed items to be checked. Three stops: the alley, the Music Box Theater, a foundry a mile east on the riverbank. This was the weary routine — check everything, look in every corner, turn over every rock. The alley stop was a good example. The two car men had found no ignition key in the convertible, no jumper of any kind. David Harlow had raised the point, just before he'd been put in the line-up: "I didn't steal that car. How could I, without a key?"

Dom McCarthy scuffed a line where the convertible had stood, another where the heaped boxes had finally trapped the boy. The hundred yards between the marks was the area to be searched. David had run that distance in the dark. He'd had time to toss away a dozen keys. The alley walls were unbroken, save for windows here and there, covered by heavy mesh, frosted by the grime of years. McCarthy checked the window sills — cobwebs, dirt. Nothing else.

He had an audience now. Two, then three, then five overalled youngsters had appeared, to trail along in his wake, whispering and giggling. They were about of an age — front teeth

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missing, or much too big. Their leader had shiny eyes and a shaven head. He grinned at McCarthy.

"Lose somethin', mister?" he asked.

"A car key. I'll give you a dollar if you find it."

The youngsters scattered to search the alley floor, to probe the dust at the foot of the walls, to look beneath bits of paper and cardboard. McCarthy watched, already sure what his report would say: "No key found in alley." That much would not hurt David. But what about the rest — the thing he knew, the thing David Harlow, a native of the precinct, must have known? "Scavenger trucks collect alley refuse just after dawn. Key could have been tossed in garbage can and hauled to incinerator before suspect mentioned it."

"No luck," said the youngster with the shaven head. "No key."

"I'm not surprised," McCarthy said. He gave them a dollar anyway.

He walked through the alley to Dock Street and the Music Box Theater. The girl at the ticket window looked at the picture of David Harlow and shook her head. "I wouldn't know if he was here last night," she said. "I don't look at their faces, only at the money." The doorman said, "Maybe; maybe not. We get hundreds like him every day."

"I have to ask," McCarthy said.

Western Foundry next. McCarthy left his car with half a hundred others in a parking lot marked: *Employees Only*. A girl in an office shack gave him a pass, and he went into a building big enough to house a blimp. Rear doors opened upon a fenced acre of yard, crammed with the bones of machines. A stocky foreman met McCarthy there.

"Brock works swing — four till midnight," he said. "He's here now."

Dom McCarthy said, "We found his car."

"Fast work," the foreman said. "Just go straight back."

McCarthy walked down a paved roadway. He paused to watch a set of giant shears reduce whole fenders to bits of scrap. He saw a truck driver napping in his cab, and wondered how a man could sleep in the midst of so much noise.

He found George Brock, finally, working in a far corner of the yard, stripping parts from the hulk of a machine. He was a pleasant kid, about twenty, faint mustache and an easy grin. His hands and coveralls were smeared with the stains of rust and grease. He rubbed his cheek, and left a red stain there.

"I was workin'," Brock said. "But I left my lunch bucket in the car. When I went after it, my car was gone."

"We didn't find a key. Have you got yours?"

"I left them on the floor, under the edge of the seat."

"Making it easy for the thief," McCarthy said. "Your car's in the police garage. You can get it in a day or two."

"Why not tonight?"

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"It was used in a holdup."

"I see," Brock said. "Fingerprints and stuff like that."

Dom McCarthy said, "I'll call you, boy." . . .

At 7 o'clock he pressed the button opposite Mary Harlow's name in the entranceway of a once-proud residence, cut now into cracker-box apartments. The lock of the front door buzzed instantly. Dom McCarthy crossed the hall to reach the stairs. He knew exactly what he had to say: "All day I've been asking myself what kind of cop I am. I even got to the place where I was wondering if I could stretch a point, or bend the facts to get your brother out. It can't be done, Mary. At least, I can't do it."

"Dom!"

He tipped his head to see her standing in the upper hall. She came to meet him, smiling, or trying to smile.

"I was hoping David would be with you," she said.

"Sorry."

"You'll work it out," she said. "I know you will."

He helped her place a card table before the tall window that looked out across the rooftops to the river front. She brought him some beer.

"Tell me what you did?" she said.

"Walked and talked," he said. "Shoe leather and patience and keep going — that's the bulk of police work. Most of the time you reach out and put your hand on the nearest guy, and you're right. But there are always tag ends that have to be nailed down. That's what I did today — chase tag ends. I hunted for the key. No luck. I talked to the theater staff. No luck. They didn't remember seeing Dave."

"That doesn't mean he wasn't there," she said quickly.

"It means they don't remember seeing him — no more, no less."

Her hand tightened on his shoulder. "Go on."

"I looked up the kid who owns the car. Brock, George Brock. He's hot-rod age, three or four years older than Dave. I gave his name to the record station, the way we always do. They had him in the file. He's been in trouble five or six times. Small stuff and some not so small. He did a year in the training school."

Mary said, "David's never been in trouble of any kind."

"Two witnesses picked him out of a line-up." Dom McCarthy kept his eyes on his glass. "And this Brock kid works 4 till 12. He was on shift when the car was stolen."

"They picked David?"

"Two witnesses," he said. "And they were sure."

She left the arm of his chair to stand before the window, her head bent, face hidden. "They're wrong — they must be wrong." Her voice shook. "Dom, what happens now. If they try David, I mean. If —"

"If they find him guilty?"

"Yes," Mary whispered."

"It depends on the judge. If it was just the car, he might get a year — perhaps suspended. The attempted holdup makes it worse. That's a one-to-five. One, usually, on a first offense.

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But there were a couple of shots fired. No one hurt, but there might have been. So it'll probably be the book. Five years."

A wordless sound escaped Mary's lips, the sound of pain. Dom McCarthy was sure he could have used a whip and hurt her less. She turned slowly. "There must be something you can do."

And there it was again: *Send my brother home!*

"These things go in a hopper," he said. "A lot of people are involved. Leg work's my job. I hunt and report facts. The D.A.'s people take over from there. Frost has this one — Abe Frost."

"You know him?"

"Yes," he said. "I know him."

"Then you can do something. He'll listen to you."

"Suppose Dave's guilty? What then?"

She did not answer that.

"Two witnesses say he is." He put his glass on a table and stood up. Her hands found a chair back, closed there. She wet her lips, pleading silently with her eyes. "I can't stay for dinner," he said. "I should have told you that when I came in. I've still got some work to do."

He'd been afraid to stay. Afraid she'd been on the point of asking him to forget the facts and send her brother home. And he could. This thing was big and important to Mary, but to the people at the Precinct House it was just another item, a one-to-five item, in an always crowded hopper. He could talk to Abe Frost. He could twist the reports he had yet to write on this day's work. He could whistle up a witness to say Dave had been in the theater at the time of the attempted holdup. Any one of a dozen of the furtive, slightly soiled men who lived on the fringe would be glad to tell that lie for him.

Whoever he picked would be around later with a tab, of course. He'd want to start a floating game some time, or a clip racket of some kind. But that would be later. He could get it fixed tonight. He could send Dave home.

He went back to the Precinct House, back to his desk. Jock Dusen was dozing in his shadowed corner, feet propped on a pulled-out drawer. He opened one sleepy eye and cleared his throat. "You owe me a buck," he said.

Dom McCarthy said, "For what?"

"A key. A little mutt with no hair brought it in." He waited until Dom McCarthy found the key lying on the blotter of his desk. "It fits," he said then. "I used it to start that pile of blue junk."

"Did he say where he'd found it?"

"In the alley," Jock said. "His address's in your basket."

"Thanks." McCarthy found and folded the slip of paper, tucked it in his pocket. "You've been around a long time, Jock. How's to answer some questions?"

"If I can."

"Suppose a man cuts a corner to give someone a break? What he does is against the rules, but what he ac-

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complishes is right — not by the book, but right in a bigger way. What happens to the man?"

"This man of yours a cop?" Jock asked quietly.

"He could be."

"I know this much," Jock said. "That 'greater good' bear trap has caught a lot of men. That was the excuse they used the first time. After that they didn't need an excuse." He brought match flame to the stub of a cigar. His eyes gleamed in the yellow light. "People seem to think cops are machines — no heart, no blood, no nerves. They don't seem to realize a cop hurts when he's hit, just like anybody else. More, maybe, because along with the lumps he's got a choice to make."

"A man goes on meeting choices?"

"No," Jock said. "There's really only one."

"That's what I thought." Dom McCarthy dropped the key in his pocket. "What about the people who expect this cop to cut corners? What about them?"

"She's a problem he'll have to solve."

"I didn't say it was a woman."

"Didn't you?" Jock dropped his chin on his chest and closed his eyes again. "This Brock kid's got quite a record for a pup. A trouble prone, if ever I saw one. He's done time. It's an odds on bet he'll do time again. But there he is, out in the clear. And there's Harlow in the tank."

"I've got work to do," Dom McCarthy said.

He went out into the night. Leg work again. He had to find the boy with the shaven head. Ask questions and part with another dollar bill. Keep going then. Walk and talk and fit a clutter of bits and fragments into a picture that made sense. One question was behind him. He knew what kind of cop he was. But Jock's words rubbed at his mind: "She's a problem he'll have to solve." And Mary was there, strongly there, through all the weary hours. He could hear her voice saying, "Dom. There must be something you can do."

She was with him through the night. She was with him at dawn when he left the Precinct House for the freshly washed and empty streets, his eyes sooty with fatigue. He rang the bell beside the card that bore her name and climbed the three long flights of stairs. She wore a robe. Her yellow hair was tumbled, but lovely.

"Dom," she said. "There's news?"

He said, "Coffee first. Then we'll talk."

He had time to think it through while she was busy in the tiny kitchen. Time to wonder what Jock, the wise old bird, would say to this. It was Jock's idea, in a way. Jock had mentioned Brock's record. Dom McCarthy rubbed tired eyes. Mary brought coffee, black and strong.

"Like this," he said. "We get what we call trouble prones. The kid who owns the convertible is one. He's had a lot of grief — truancy, traffic, petty theft. But it won't stop there. With

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people like Brock it never does. You get so you can look at the record and draw a graph. He'll go from one jam to another, and they'll get bigger each time: Housebreaking, loft jobs, until he pulls the big one: Murder."

Mary said, "I don't quite see —"

"You will," he said. "There's Brock — this trouble prone — and there's your brother. One's a born heel; the other's got a past as clean as a Sunday shirt. Now. We can hang it on Brock. He was working, but out in the foundry yard. The foreman can't keep an eye on everybody out there, even in the daytime. Slipping away for an hour or two would be a cinch. Brock says he left his key in the car. He reported the car stolen, but not until after the holdup flopped. He could have used that for cover. He could have left it in the alley and ducked back to the foundry."

"And David came along to pretend Brock's car belonged to him."

"The key turned up in the alley, on a window sill. We don't have to worry about the key. Either one of them could have thrown it there. But we've got this: Brock says he left his lunch bucket in the car. He went after it and the car wasn't there." McCarthy's cup rattled against the saucer. "Suppose a lunch bucket with Brock's name scratched on it showed up in his room."

"His alibi wouldn't be worth much," Mary said.

"The lunch bucket and his record would talk louder than a couple of witnesses." McCarthy put his cup on the table beside the chair. His hand was shaking. "It is possible to make the coat fit the man."

"Initials don't care who scratch them on a bucket."

"That's very true," McCarthy said. "And cheap .38s are not hard to find. Dave and Brock are about a size — close enough so the witnesses will probably change their minds."

"The gun and bucket would be planted?" she said. "Is that it?"

Dom McCarthy turned his eyes to the tall window, golden now with the first of the sun. "They could be," he said, and the words had a dirty taste. He leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes. He had tossed the key to the door of David's cell into her lap. He had carried it all day — a witness whistled up would have done as well as a lunch bucket and a gun. He had learned it was not a key he could use. Now he had passed the burden of the choice to her.

"You asked me to do something," he said. "Anything."

"I did." Her voice was thin and slow. "I thought David was innocent. I still believe he is. I was asking — praying, really — for some sort of miracle to prove that. But not this, Dom. If David is guilty" — the rest was faint on her escaping breath — "then see that he gets exactly what anyone else would get."

"Forgive me," he said. "I had to know. There was no other way to find out, and I had to know. I should be ashamed, Mary, and I am. But I had

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this same decision on my back all day. There were a couple of times when I thought Dom McCarthy was heel enough to rig a frame like that."

"You couldn't, Dom. But I almost asked —"

"You considered it. We both did. But you couldn't, not in the clutch, not when you came face to face with it. We've learned something, Mary, the hard way. That's a hurdle passed. It's behind us, and we'll never have to worry about it again." He lifted one hand. "And now I can tell you this: It wasn't Dave, Mary. It was Brock."

"Dom!"

"The key turned up on a window sill that had been searched and found empty. Brock got his wind up when I started asking questions, so he put it there today, trying to turn attention away from himself. But it worked the other way. There was a lunch bucket and a gun in Brock's room. The service station attendant finally remembered rust stains on the hand of the holdup man. And that was enough. Brock confessed. Dave will be home as soon as the day man shows up to write a release."

Her eyes were shining. "Do you mind if I say you're wonderful?"

"I'm a cop," he said. "I did what we always do. Shoe leather and patience and keep going. Wear out your shoes and work up an appetite." He smiled at her. "How about breakfast?"

"Bacon and eggs and rolls and —"

"And a kiss," he said.

WINNER OF *THE THREE KNOCKS* CONTEST

Once again we learn from experience that searching out clues and finding the elusive fact is the pure instinct of the mystery fan. Our challenge to the readers of *EQMM* to find the author of the story *The Three Knocks* proved far more fruitful than our own perusals of libraries and editorial offices.

Mrs. Herbert S. Frisbie, Northbrook, Illinois was the first to write with the correct answer. Much to our surprise there were eight other accurate sleuths. The author, as Mrs. Frisbie and our eight correspondents informed us was — Edith MacVane. *The Three Knocks* appeared in the December, 1913 issue of McClure's Magazine.

Correct answers were also submitted by: Mary E. Anderson, New York, New York; Ray Anderson, New York, New York; Ev Bleiler, Holliston, Mass.; Abraham Fox, Brooklyn, New York; E. R. Hagemann, Bloomington, Indiana; Michael D. Hurley, Los Angeles, California; Marion Langerman, Berkeley, California; and an anonymous librarian from Portland, Oregon.

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IN THE ABSENCE OF MONSIEUR

by GUY WETMORE CARRYL

MONSIEUR ARMAND MICHEL — seated before his newly installed Titian — was in the act of saying to himself that if its acquisition could not, with entire accuracy, be viewed as an unqualified bargain, it had been, at least, an indisputable stroke of diplomacy, when his complacent meditation was interrupted by the entrance of Arsène.

It was the first time that Monsieur Michel had seen his new servant in his official capacity, and he was not ill-pleased. Arsène was in flawless evening dress, in marked contrast to the objectionably flamboyant costume in which, on the preceding evening, he had made application for the position of valet-maître d'hôtel, left vacant by the fall from grace of Monsieur Michel's former factotum. That costume had come near to being his undoing. The fastidious Armand had regarded with an offended eye the brilliant green cravat, the unspeakable checked suit, and the painfully pointed chrome-yellow shoes in which the applicant was arrayed, and more than once, in the course of conversation, was on the point of putting a peremptory end to the negotiations by a crushing comment on would-be servants who dressed like café chantant comedians.

But the references had outweighed the costume. Monsieur Michel did not remember ever to have read more unqualified commendation. Arsène had been for two years in the service of the Comte de Chambour, whose square pink marble hôtel on the Avenue de Malakoff is accounted, in this degenerate age, one of the sights of Paris; and this of itself, was more than a little. The Comte did not keep his eyes in his pockets, by any manner of means, when it came to the affairs of his household, and apparently there was nothing too good for him to say about Arsène. Here, on pale blue note-paper, and surmounted by the de Chambour crest, it was set forth that the bearer was sober, honest, clean, willing, capable, quiet, intelligent, and respectful. *And* discreet. When the Comte de Chambour gave his testimony on this last point it meant that you were getting the opinion of an expert. Monsieur Michel refolded the reference, tapped it three times upon the palm of his left hand, and engaged the bearer without further ado.

Now, as Arsène went quickly about the salon, drawing the curtains and clearing away the card table, which remained as mute witness to Monsieur Michel's ruling passion, he was the beau idéal of a gentleman's manservant — unobtrusive in manner and movement, clean-shaven and clear-eyed, adapting himself without need

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of instruction to the details of his new surroundings. A less complacent person than Armand might have been aware that, while he was taking stock of Arsène, Arsène was taking stock, with equal particularity, of him. And there was an unpleasant slyness in his black eyes, a something akin to alertness in his thin nostrils, which moved like those of a rabbit, and seemed to accomplish more than their normal share of conveying to their owner's intelligence an impression of exterior things. Also, had Monsieur Michel but observed it, his new servant walked just a trifle *too* softly, and his hands were just a trifle *too* white and slender. Moreover, he had a habit of smiling to himself when his back was turned, which is an undesirable thing in anybody, and approaches the ominous in a valet-maître d'hôtel.

But Monsieur Michel was far too much of an aristocrat to have any doubt of his power to overawe and impress his inferiors, or to see in the newcomer's excessive inconspicuity anything more than a commendable recognition of monsieur's commanding presence. So, when Arsène completed his work and had shut the door noiselessly behind him, his master rubbed his hands and said, "*Ter-rès bien!*" in a low voice, this being his superlative expression of satisfaction. Had his glance been able to penetrate his salon door, it would have met, in the antechamber, with the astounding spectacle of his new servant in the act of tossing monsieur's silk hat into the air, and catching it, with extreme dexterity, on the bridge of his nose. Unfortunately, the other side of the door is something which, like the future and the bank accounts of our debtors, it is not given us to see. So Monsieur Michel repeated his "*Ter-rès bien!*" and fell again to contemplating his Titian.

Yes, undoubtedly, it had been a great stroke of diplomacy. The young Marchese degli Abbraccioli was not conspicuous for his command of ready money, but his father had left him the finest private collection of paintings in Rome, and this, in consequence of chronic financial stress, was gradually passing from the walls of his palazzo in the via Cavour into the possession of an appreciative but none too extravagant government. It had been an inspiration, this proposal of Monsieur Michel's to settle his claim upon the Marchese for his overwhelming losses at baccarat, by taking over one of the two Titians which flanked the chimney-piece in his study. The young Italian had assented eagerly, and had supplemented his acquiescence with a proposal to dispose of the pendant for somewhat more material remuneration than canceled reconnaissances. But Armand Michel had undertaken it before, this delicate task of getting objets d'art over the Italian frontier — yes, and been caught in the act, too, and forced to disgorge. For the moment, it was enough to charge himself with one picture, on the given conditions, without risking hard cash in the experiment. Later — well, later, one would see.

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Monsieur Michel fairly hugged himself as he thought of his success. *Mon Dieu, quelle génie*, that false bottom to his trunk! He had come safely through them all, the imbecile inspectors, and now his treasure hung fairly and finally upon his wall, smiling at him out of its tapestry surroundings. It was *épatant*, truly, and moreover, all there was of the most *calé*. Only one small cloud of regret hung upon the broad blue firmament of his satisfaction — the other picture! It had been so easy. He might as well have had two as one. And now, without doubt, the imbecile Marchese would sell the pendant to the imbecile government, and that would be the end of it so far as private purchase was concerned. Monsieur Michel rose from his chair with a gesture of impatience, and, drawing the curtain back from the window, looked out lugubriously upon the March cheerlessness of the Place Vendôme. Little by little, a most seductive plan formed itself in his mind. After all, why not? A couple of weeks at Monte Carlo, a week at Sorrento, and a fortnight at Rome, in which to win the Titian from the Marchese degli Abbraccioli, by baccarat if possible, or by banknotes should fortune prove unkind. It was the simplest thing in the world, and he would avoid the remainder of the wet weather and be back for the opening of Longchamps. And Monsieur Michel rubbed his hands and said, "*Ter-rès bien!*" again, with much emphasis.

When, a week later, Arsène was informed of Monsieur's intention to leave him in sole charge of his apartment for a time, he received the intelligence with the dignified composure of one who feels himself worthy of the confidence reposed in him. The cook was to have the vacation for which she had been clamoring, that she might display to her relatives in Lille the elaborate wardrobe which was the result of her savings during three years in Monsieur Michel's employ. Perfectly. And the apartment was to be aired and dusted daily, as if monsieur himself were there. And visitors to be told that monsieur was returning in a month. And letters to be made to follow monsieur, to Monte Carlo at first, and then to Rome. But perfectly; it was completely understood. Arsène bowed a number of times in succession, and outwardly was as calm as a tall, candid-faced clock, being wound up to run for a specified time independent of supervision. But beneath that smooth and carefully oiled expanse of jet-black hair a whole colony of the most fantastic ideas suddenly aroused themselves and began to elbow each other about in a veritable tumult.

Monsieur Michel took his departure in a whirl of confusion, losing a quantity of indispensable articles with exclamations of despair, and finding them the next moment with cries of satisfaction. Eugénie, the cook, compactly laced into a traveling dress of blue silk, stood at the doorway to bid her master goodbye, and was run into at each instant by the cabman or the

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concierge or Monsieur Michel himself, each of whom covered, at top speed, several kilometres of stairs and hallway, in the stupendous task of transferring a trunk, a valise, a hatbox, a shawl-strap, and an umbrella from the apartment to the carriage below. On the surface of this uproar, the presence of Arsène swam as serenely as a swan on a maelstrom. He accompanied his master to the Gare de Lyon, and the last object which met the anxious eyes of Monsieur Michel, peering out from one of the first-class carriages of the departing express, was his new servant, standing upon the platform, as unmoved by the events of the morning as if monsieur had been passing from the dining room to take coffee in the salon instead of from Paris to take breakfast in Marseilles. The sight of him was intensely soothing to the fevered spirit of Monsieur Michel, on whom the details of such a departure produced much the same effect as do cakes of soap when tossed into the mouth of an active geyser.

"He is calm," he said to himself, rubbing his hands. "He is very calm, and he will not lose his head while I am gone. *Ter-rès bien!*"

But the calm of Arsène was the calm of thin ice over swiftly rushing waters. As the polished buffers of the last carriage swung out of sight around the curve with a curiously furtive effect, like the eyes of an alarmed animal, slipping backward into its burrow, he clenched the fingers of his right hand, and slipping his thumbnail under the edge of his upper teeth, drew it forward with a sharp click. At the same time he said something to his vanished master in the second person singular, which is far from being the address of affection on the lips of a valet-maître d'hôtel.

Wheeling suddenly after this singular manifestation, Arsène found himself the object of close and seemingly amused scrutiny on the part of an individual standing directly behind him. There was something so extremely disconcerting in this gentleman's unexpected proximity, and in his very evident enjoyment of the situation, that Arsène was upon the point of turning abruptly away, when the other addressed him, speaking the colloquial French of their class, with the slightest possible hint of foreign accent.

"Bah, vieux! Is it that I do not know what they are, the patrons? Oh, lalà!"

"*Avec ça!* There are some who have it, an astounding audacity!" said Arsène to the air over the stranger's head.

"*Farceur!*" replied the stranger, to the air over Arsène's. And then — "There are two parrakeets that have need of plucking across the way," he added, reflectively.

"There are two empty sacks here to put the feathers in," answered Arsène, with alacrity; and ten minutes later, oblivious to the chill damp of the March morning, Arsène and his new-found acquaintance, seated at a little table in front of a nearby wine-shop, were preparing in com-

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pany the smoky-green mixture of absinthe and water which Paris slang has dubbed a parrakeet. On the part of Arsène the operation was performed with elaborate solicitude, and as he poured a tiny stream of water over the lump of sugar on the flat spoon balanced deftly across the glass, he held his head tipped sidewise and his left eye closed, in the manner of a contemplative fowl, and was oblivious to all but the delectable business of the moment.

But his companion, while apparently deeply engaged in the preparation of his own beverage, was far from being wholly preoccupied thereby. He was a man shorter by an inch or two than Monsieur Michel's maître d'hôtel, dressed in the most inconspicuous fashion, and with an air of avoiding any emphasis of voice or gesture which would be apt to attract more than casual attention to the circumstance of his existence. There was something about him vaguely suggestive of a chameleon, an instant harmonizing of his appearance and manner with any background whatsoever against which he chanced to find himself placed, and a curious clouding of his eyes when unexpectedly they were met by those of another, which lent him an immediate air of profound stupidity. No doubt his long practice in this habit of self-obliteration made him doubly appreciative of Arsène's little outburst of ill-feeling on the platform of the Gare de Lyon. A man who would do that in public had much to learn!

Just now, however, this gentleman's eyes were very bright, though they had dwindled to mere slits; and he followed every movement of the unconscious Arsène with short, swift glances from beneath his drooping lids, as, bit by bit, the lumps of sugar melted under the steady drip of the trickling water, and the opalescent mixture mounted toward the brims. He knew but two varieties of absinthe drinker, this observant individual — the one who progressed, under its influence, from cheerful candor to shrewdest insight into the motives of others; the other whom, by easy stages, it led from obstinate reserve to the extreme of careless garrulity. At this moment he was on the alert for symptoms.

Arsène looked up suddenly as the last morsel of his sugar melted, and, lifting his glass, dipped it before the eyes of his new friend.

"To your health — Monsieur —?" he said, in courteous interrogation.

"Hercule," said the other.

"Bon! And I, Hercule, am Arsène, maître d'hôtel, at your service, of the type who has just taken himself off, down there."

And he indicated the imposing pile of the Gare de Lyon with his thumb, and then, closing his eyes, took a long sip of his absinthe, and replacing the glass upon the table, plunged his hands into his pockets and stared off gloomily toward the Seine.

"Poof!" he said, "but I am content that he is gone. What a filthiness, a rich man — what?"

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"Not to be denied," agreed Hercule. "There is not a foreign sou's worth of delicacy in the whole lot!"

"Mazette! I believe thee," answered the other, much pleased. Hercule's thin lips relaxed the veriest trifle at the familiarity, and he lit a cigarette and gazed vacantly into space.

"But what dost thou expect?" he observed, with calm philosophy.

It appeared that what Arsène expected was that honest folk should not work from seven to ten, in an ignoble box of a pantry, on boots, and silver, and whatnot, he demanded of him, name of a pipe! and dust, and sweep, and serve at table, good heaven! and practice a species of disgusting politeness to a type of old engraving like Monsieur Armand Michel. And all, oh, mon Dieu! for the crushing sum of $20 a month, did he comprehend? while the animal in question was sowing his yellow buttons by fistfuls. Mazette! Evidently, he himself was not an eagle. He did not demand the Louvre to live in, for example, nor the existence lalala of Émile Loubet — what? but it was not amusing, he assured him, to be in the employ of the great revolting one in question. Ah, non!

"Eiffelesque!" succinctly commented Hercule.

But, said Arsène, there was another side to the question, and he himself, it went without saying, was no waffle-iron, speaking of stupidity. He had not been present the day fools were distributed. Oh, far from that! In consequence, it was to become humpbacked with mirth, that part of his life passed behind the back of the example of an old Sophie whom he had the honor to serve. He had not forgotten how to juggle since he traveled with a band of mountebanks. And there were the patron's plates — at 100 francs the piece, good blood! Also he smoked the ancient cantaloupe's cigarettes, and as for the wines — tchutt! Arsène kissed his fingertips and took a long sip of absinthe.

"He is gone for long?" inquired Hercule.

Ah, that! Who knew? Six weeks at least. And meanwhile might not a brave lad amuse himself in the empty apartment — eh? Oh, it would be life in a gondola, name of a name of a name!

The conversation was prolonged for an hour, Arsène growing more and more confidential under the seductive influence of his parrakeet that, by degrees, Hercule captured completely the fancy of the volatile valet, and was permitted to take his departure only on the condition of presenting himself in the Place Vendôme that evening for the purpose of smoking the cantaloupe's cigarettes and seeing Arsène juggle with the hundred-franc plates.

Hercule was as good as his word. He put in an appearance promptly at eight o'clock, hung his hat and coat, at his host's invitation, on a Louis Quinze applique, and made himself comfortable in a chaise longue which — on the guarantee of Duveen — had

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once belonged to the Pompadour. Arsène outdid himself in juggling, and afterwards they cracked a bottle of Château Laffitte and drank it with great satisfaction out of Salviati glasses, topping off the entertainment with Russian kümmel and two of Monsieur Michel's cigars. Arsène, in his picturesque idiom, expressed himself as being tapped in the eye with his new friend to the extent of being able to quit him no longer, and forthwith Hercule took up his quarters in the bedroom of the cantaloupe, his host established himself in Monsieur Michel's Empire guest chamber, and the "life in a gondola" went forward for five weeks to the supreme contentment of both parties.

Now it is a peculiarity of life in a gondola, as is known to all who have sampled its delights, that, while it lasts, consideration of past and future alike becomes dulled, and one loses all sense of responsibility in the lethal torpor of the present. So it was not until Arsène received a letter from Monsieur Michel, announcing his return, that he began to figure up the possible consequences of his experiment. They were, as he gloomily announced to Hercule, stupefying to the extent of dashing out one's brains against the wall. Only one bottle of Château Laffitte remained, and none whatever of Russian kümmel. Moreover, the brocade of the chaise longue was hopelessly ruined by the boots of the conspirators, and the enthusiasm of Arsène's juggling had reduced by fifty per cent the set of Sèvres plates. What was to be done, bon Dieu, what *was* to be done?

Hercule having carefully perused a letter with an Italian stamp, which had come by the evening mail, revolved the situation in his mind, slowly smoking the last of the cantaloupe's cigars, and glancing from time to time at the despondent figure of his host, with his eyes narrowed to mere slits. Had the fish been sufficiently played? He reeled in a foot or so of line by way of experiment.

"What, after all, is a situation?" he said. "Thou wilt be discharged, yes. But afterwards? Pah! thou wilt find another. And thou hast thy rigolade."

"Ah, that!" replied Arsène with a shrug. "I believe thee! But thinkest thou my old melon will find himself in the way of gluing the ribbon of the Légion on me for what I have done? I see myself from here, playing the harp on the bars of La Maz!"

"*La vie à Mazas, c'est pas la vie en gondole*," observed Hercule philosophically.

"*Tu parles!*"

Hercule appeared to take a sudden resolve. He swung his feet to the floor, and bending forward in the chaise longue, began to speak rapidly and with extreme earnestness.

"*Voyons, donc, mon gars*, thou hast been foolish, but one must not despair. What is done in France is never known in Italy. And here thou art surrounded by such treasures as the imbeciles of foreigners pay for-

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tunes for. Take what thou hast need of — a trunk of the patron's, some silver, what thou canst lay hands on of gold and brass and enamel, whatever will not break — and get away before he returns. In Milan thou canst sell it all, and get another place. I have friends there, and thou shalt have letters. *Voilà!*"

"But one must have money," replied Arsène, brightening, nevertheless. "And that is lacking me."

Hercule seemed to ponder this objection deeply. Finally, with a sigh of resignation, he spoke again.

"*B'en, voilà!* Thou hast been my friend, is it not so? Hercule is not the man to b. ungrateful. I am poor, and have need of my little savings — But, there! it is for a friend — pas? Let us say no more!" And he thrust a roll of banknotes into the hands of the stupefied Arséne.

The evening was spent in arranging the details of the flight. Arsène produced a serviceable trunk from the storeroom, and in this the two men placed a great variety of the treasures which Monsieur Michel had accumulated during twenty years of patient search and exorbitant expense. Squares of priceless tapestry, jeweled watches and snuff boxes, figurines of old Sèvres, ivories cunningly carved and yellow with age, madonnas of box-wood and wax and ebony — all were carefully wrapped in newspapers and stowed away; and to these Arsène added a dozen of his master's shirts, two suits of clothes, and a box of cigarettes. But when all the available material had been appropriated there yet remained an empty space below the tray. It would never do to have the treasures knocking about on the way. Arsène proposed a blanket — or, better yet, one of Monsieur Michel's overcoats. But Hercule, after rearranging the trunk so as to make the empty space of different form, turned suddenly to his companion, who was picking nervously at his fingers and watching the so fruitful source of suggestion with a pathetic air of entreaty, and clapped him gleefully upon the chest.

"A painting!" he exclaimed.

Complete demoralization seemed to have taken possession of Arsène. He was very pale, and his eyes constantly sought the salon door as if he expected the object of his ingenious epithets to burst in at any moment, with the prefect and all his legions at his heels.

"A painting?" he repeated blankly; "But how, a painting?"

But Hercule had already mounted nimbly on a chair and lifted the cherished Titian of Monseiur Michel from its place against the tapestry. There was no further need of persuasion. The moment had come for action; and seizing a hammer, he began to wrench off the frame, talking rapidly between short gasps of exertion.

"But certainly, a painting. This one is small — ugh! — but who can say how valuable? They sell readily down there, these black daubs. Ah! By rolling, it will fill the empty

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space, seest thou, and later it may mean a thousand francs. One does not do things by — umph! — by halves in such a case. Sacred nails! One would say they had been driven in for eternity! Oof! Thou art fortunate to have me to advise thee, great imbecile. Mayhap this is worth all the rest. Pig of a frame, va! It is of iron. Ugh! He will be furious, thy patron, but what of that? In Italy thou wilt hear no more of it. Still one nail. Come away, then, type of a cow! *Enfin!*"

With one final effort he tore off the last fragment of frame, peeled the canvas from the backboard, and, rolling it carefully, tucked it into the empty space, replaced the tray, and closed the trunk with a snap.

"*Voilà!*" he said, straightening himself and turning a red but triumphant face to the astounded maître d'hôtel.

"Now for the letters," he added, seating himself at Monsieur Michel's desk and beginning to scribble busily. "Do thou go for a cab, and at a gallop. It has struck half-past 10 and the Bâle rapide leaves the Gare de l'Est at midnight."

Hardly had the door of the apartment closed upon the demoralized valet when Hercule hastily shoved to one side the note he had begun, and, writing a sentence or two upon another slip of paper, wrapped the latter about a two-sou piece, and went quietly to the salon window. Opening this cautiously, he found a fine rain falling outside, and the eastern half of the square deserted save for two figures — one the flying form of Arsène, cutting across a corner into the Rue Castiglione in search of a cab, and the other that of a man muffled in a heavy overcoat and with a slouch hat pulled well over his eyes, who was lounging against the railing of the Column, and who, as Hercule opened the window, shook himself into activity and stepped nimbly out across the wide driveway. Hercule placed the paper containing the two-sou piece upon the window sill and with a sharp flick of his forefinger sent it spinning down into the square. The man in the slouch hat stooped for an instant in passing the spot where it lay, and Hercule, softly closing the window, stretched his arms upward into a semblance of a gigantic letter Y, and indulged in a prodigious yawn.

"*Ça y est!*" said he.

Papa Briguette had long since climbed into his high bedstead, in the *loge de concierge*, when, for the second time in fifteen minutes, he was aroused by the voice of Arsène calling, "*Cordon, s'il vous plaît!*" in the main hallway, and, reaching from under his feather coverlid, pressed the bulb which unlocked the street-door.

"*Quel coureur, que ce gars!*" grumbled the worthy man to his fat spouse, snoring complacently at his side. "I deceive myself if, when Monsieur Michel returns, thou dost not hear a different story."

"Awr-r-r-r!" replied Maman Briguette.

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On the way to the Gare de l'Est, Arsène recovered the better part of his lost composure, and listened with something akin to cheerfulness to the optimistic prognostications of his companion. By the time the precious trunk was registered and he had secured his seat in a second-class compartment of the Bâle rapide, he was once more in high feather and profuse in expressions of gratitude, as he smoked a farewell cigarette with Hercule while waiting for the train to start.

"Thou canst believe me, *mon vieux*," Arsène protested. "It is not a little thing that thou hast done, name of a name. Ah, non! It was the act of a brave comrade, that I assure thee. *Et voyons!* When I have sold the effects down there, thou shalt have back thy little paper mattress, word of honor! Yes, and more — thy share of the gain!"

Arsène grasped the other's hand fervently as a passing guard threw them a curt "*En voiture, messieurs!*" and seemed on the point of kissing him farewell. There was some confusion attendant upon his entering the compartment, owing to the excessive haste of a man muffled in a heavy overcoat and with a slouch hat pulled well over his eyes, who arrived at the last moment and persisted in scrambling in, at the very instant chosen by Arsène. The latter immediately reappeared at the window, and, as the train began to move, shouted a few final acknowledgments at his benefactor.

"*B'en, au r'voir, vieux!* And I will write thee from below there, thou knowest. A thousand thanks. Fear not for thy blue paper — what? Thou shalt have it back, sou for sou, name of a name!

"I shall never forget thee, never!" Arsène cried, as a kind of afterthought.

"Ah, ça!" said Hercule to himself, as Arsène's face went out of sight, "*that* I well believe!"

Yet, so inconstant is man, the promised letter never reached Hercule. Another did, however, and it was this which he might have been observed reading to a friend, with every evidence of the liveliest satisfaction, one week later, at a rear table before the Taverne Royale. One would hardly have recognized the plainly, almost shabbily dressed comrade of Arsène, with his retiring manners and his furtive eyes, in this extremely prosperous individual, in polished top hat, white waistcoat and gaiters, and gloves of lemon yellow. His companion was equally imposing in appearance, and it was apparent that he derived as much amusement from listening to Hercule's epistle as did the latter from reading it aloud.

The letter ran as follows:

MILAN, *April 20*

MY GOOD HERCULE, — I am leaving here today for Rome, where the case of the government against the Marchese degli Abbraccioli is to come on next week, but before I do so I must write you of the

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last act in the little comedy of Arsène. I never lost sight of him from the moment we left Paris, and when he found I was also on my way to Italy, he became confidential, and, in exchange for certain information which I was able to give him about Milan, etc., told me a long story about himself and his affairs, which I found none the less amusing for knowing it to be a tissue of lies. The time passed readily enough, but I was relieved when we started over the St. Gothard, because I knew then that the game was as good as played. We arrived at Chiasso on time (two o'clock) and I found Sassevero on the platform when I jumped out. He had come on from Rome the night before, and was in a positive panic because Palmi, who had been watching old Michel there, had lost him somehow, and nobody knew where he'd gone. He might have come through on any train, of course, and Sassevero didn't even know him by sight.

Naturally, our little business with Arsène was soon done. Cagliacci is still chief of customs at Chiasso, and he simply confiscated the trunk and everything in it, though, of course, the government wasn't after anything but the picture. There were two hours of argument over the disposition of Arsène, but the Old Man is shy of diplomatic complications and he had told Sassevero to frighten the chap thoroughly and then let him slip off.

Here comes in the most remarkable part of all. Just as Arsène was marching out of the room, in came the Lucerne express, and our friend walks almost into the arms of an oldish gentleman who had jumped out of a carriage and was hurrying into the customs room.

"Bon Dieu!" said this individual, "what does *this* mean?"

"What does what mean?" put in Sassevero like a flash, and the other was so taken by surprise that, before he had time to think what he was saying, the secret was out.

"That's my valet de chambre!"

"Really?" said Sassevero. "Bravo! Then you're the gentleman with the Marchese degli Abbraccioli's second Titian in the false bottom of his trunk!"

Could anything have been more exquisite? The old chap is out some hundred thousand lire on the transaction, because, of course, Cagliacci confiscated it like the other. It was a sight to remember — the two pictures side by side in his room, and Michel and Arsène cursing each other above them! We all went on to Milan by the next train, except Arsène, who did the prudent thing on the appearance of his padrone, and disappeared, but Michel's appeal to the French consulate was of no effect. The consul told him flat that he was going directly against the law in trying to get old works of art over

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the frontier, and that he couldn't plead ignorance after the discovery of the false bottom.

Sassevero says the Old Man is immensely pleased with the way you handled your end of the affair. The funny part of it is that Arsène apparently hadn't the most remote suspicion of your being in any way involved in his catastrophe.

Your most devoted,

CAVALETTO

"In the Absence of Monsieur" was first published in book form in the United States in 1903. Please note the date.

Now we solemnly swear that the first names of the two chief characters in the story were just as you read them — Arsène and Hercule. Yes, those were the names the author, Guy Wetmore Carryl, originally gave to his characters 'way back in 1903.

Amazing anticipation, is it not?

Here we have a thief named Arsène — four years ahead of the birth in book form of the greatest of all Arsènes, Arsène Lupin. Here, too, we have a detective named Hercule — seventeen years ahead of the greatest of all Hercules, Hercule Poirot. An absolutely extraordinary anticipation of both names and vocations!

True, the Arsène in Mr. Carryl's story finally emerges as a bumbling dupe. The one and only Arsène Lupin could never have been guilty of handling an affair so stupidly; but Lupin, as we now realize, came later. However, it must be admitted, that the theft of a Titian represented in itself another remarkable anticipation — stealing Old Masters was one of the great Arsène's greatest weaknesses.

True, also, the Hercule in Mr. Carryl's story hardly comes up to the highest standards achieved by the later Hercule. But again the anticipation is almost unbelievable — indeed, it is unbelievable. For surely it is entirely possible, even today, that the Italian government might call in the little Belgian of the little gray cells to investigate and put a stop to the smuggling of Old Masters.

The great Arsène Lupin had his brushes with Sherlock Holmes (Herlock Sholmes, Holmlock Shears, etc.). But, alas, with the creator of Lupin no longer with us, it is impossible for Lupin and Poirot to match wits in a modern battle of giants. All the more reason, therefore, that we should be deeply grateful to Guy Wetmore Carryl for his incredible foreshadowing of such a detective duel!

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ALL IN THE WAY YOU LOOK AT IT

by EDMUND CRISPIN

SEVEN O'CLOCK . . . THE GATHERing darkness was accentuated by a fog which had appeared dispiritingly at about tea-time. Looking across the river, you could no longer make out the half-demolished Festival buildings on the far side; and although October was still young, the sooty trees on the Embankment had already surrendered their stoic green to the first spears of the cold, and there were few homekeeping folk hardy enough to resist the temptation of a fire. Presently, to a servile nation-wide juggling with clocks, Summer Time would officially end. In the meanwhile, it seemed that Nature's edict had anticipated Parliament's by a matter of several days; so that more than one belated office-worker, scurrying to catch his bus in Whitehall or the Strand, shivered a little, and hunched his shoulders, as he met the cold vapor creeping into London from the Thames . . .

In a room high up in a corner of New Scotland Yard, a room where the lights had had to be turned on more than two hours ago, Detective-Inspector Humbleby produced a sherry decanter and two glasses from a filing cabinet implausibly marked *Jewel Thefts*, and displayed them to his visitor, who said: "I didn't know you were allowed to keep drink on the premises."

"We're not." Humbleby poured the sherry without any special sign of perturbation. "And I," he added, "am the only officer in the entire building who does. There's discipline for you . . . But look here, Gervase, are you sure you wouldn't like to go on to the club, or wherever we're dining, and let me join you as soon as this call has come through?"

"No, no." And Gervase Fen, Professor of English Language and Literature in the University of Oxford, shook his head emphatically. "It's perfectly comfortable here. What's more, your sherry" — he sipped experimentally and his face brightened — "your sherry is too good to leave. But what is the call? Anything important?"

"A routine report. From a pleasant enough though rather ponderous colleague called Bolsover, of the Mid-Wessex C.I.D. They dragged me in to work with him on a case," said Humbleby, without relish, "arising out of primitive rustic passions. Tuesday and Wednesday I was on the spot where the thing happened, but then yesterday I had to travel back here so as to give evidence this morning at the Elderton trial, and Bolsover promised to telephone me here this evening and let me know if there was anything new."

"What sort of case?"

"Murder. It makes my twentieth this year. There are times when I wish

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I'd specialized in art forgeries, or something peaceful and infrequent like that. Lloyd Jones, who's our best man for that kind of thing, has done practically nil for the last six months. . . . However, it's no use moaning, I suppose."

"Will you have to go back to Wessex?"

"Yes, tomorrow — unless in the meantime Bolsover's solved the thing on his own. I'm rather hoping he has, and that that's why he's late with his call." Humbleby raised his glass to the light and contemplated its contents with solemn gloom. "It's been an exasperating business, and the sooner it's done with, the better I shall be pleased. I don't like Wessex, either. I don't like any bucolic place."

"Well, but what is the problem?"

"An alibi. We know who *did* the killing — we're morally certain, that is — but the wretched fellow has an alibi and I can't for the life of me see the flaw in it."

A little superciliously, Fen sniffed. His long, lean form was sprawled gracelessly in the office's only tolerable chair, his ruddy clean-shaven face wore an expression of incredulity, and his brown hair, ineffectually plastered down with water, stood up, as usual, in mutinous spikes at the crown of his head.

"Perhaps there isn't a flaw in it," he suggested. "It wouldn't be the first time a moral certainty had been turned out to be a total delusion. What sort of a moral certainty is it, anyway?"

"It's a question," said Humbleby, "of fingerprints. A certain man's fingerprints were found on the weapon with which the murder was committed. The prints were slightly blurred, I'll grant you; someone wearing gloves *could* have used the gun subsequently, and left the prints intact. But then, this man's explanation of how they came to be there is a demonstrable lie — and what's more he has a strong motive for the crime. So you see how it is."

"I'm not sure that I do," said Fen. "Not so far. But since we've got to wait for our dinner, we may as well pass the time usefully: tell me about it."

Humbleby sighed, glancing first at his wrist-watch and then at the telephone which stood mute by his elbow. Then, abruptly reaching a decision, he got up, pulled the curtains to across the windows, dispensed more sherry, and finally settled himself back into the desk-chair with the air of one who is now prepared to stand a long siege. "Cassibury Bardwell," he began suddenly, "is the scene. I don't know if you've ever been there?" Fen shook his head.

"Well, it's a hybrid sort of place, too big to be a village and too small to be a town. The houses are almost all built of a damp-looking gray stone, and the rainwater pours down the surrounding hill-slopes into the main street from all points of the compass, all year round. The nearest railway station is miles away, and the people are in every sense inbred. They're

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chiefly occupied with — well, *farming*, I suppose," said Humbleby dubiously. "But it's not, in any event, a very prosperous locality. In the countryside, round about, there are, apart from the farms, a few remote, inaccessible, horrid little cottages, and in one of these, tended only by a sister of advancing years, lived the protagonist of my tale."

"More matter," said Fen, somewhat restively, "with less art."

"Unconscious of his doom" — Humbleby had at last found a cheroot, and was applying fire to it from a desk lighter — "unconscious of his doom, the little victim, aged about 30 and by name of Joshua Ledlow, which goes to show the potency of the tradition of Biblical nomenclature in these less accessible rural places — the little victim . . . What was I saying?"

"Really, Humbleby . . ."

"Here is this Joshua, then." All at once Humbleby abandoned frivolity and became businesslike. "Thirty years old, unmarried, of a rather sombre and savage temperament, socially a cut above the farm laborer and living modestly on money left him by a farmer father. He is looked after by his sister Cicely, a good ten years older than he is, who shows no particular fondness for him and who would in any case prefer to be looking after a husband, but who remains unwooed and, having no fortune of her own, housekeeps for Joshua as a respectable substitute for earning a living. Joshua, meanwhile, is courting, the object of his fancy being a heavily built girl called Vashti Winterbourne, who appears to have cast herself for the role of Cassibury Bardwell's *femme fatale*. She didn't seem to me, when I met her, to be physically very well suited for this task, but the local standard of female beauty is extraordinarily low, so I suppose . . . Well, anyway, you see what I mean.

"Now, as you'd expect, Joshua isn't alone in his admiration for this rustic charmer. He has a rival, by name Arthur Penge, by vocation the local ironmonger; and it is clear that Vashti will soon have to make up her mind which of these two suitors she is going to marry. In the meantime, relations between the two men degenerate into something like open hostility, the situation being complicated by the fact that Joshua's sister Cicely has fallen in love with Penge, thereby converting the original triangle into a sort of — um — quadrangle. So there you have all the ingredients for a thoroughly explosive mixture — and in due course it does, in fact, explode.

"With that much preliminary," continued Humbleby rather grandly, "I can go on to describe what happened last Saturday and Sunday. What happened on *Saturday* was a public quarrel, of epic proportions, between Joshua, Cicely, and Penge. This enormous row took place in the entrance-hall of *The Jolly Ploughboy*, which is by just a fraction the less repellent of Cassibury's two pubs, and consisted of (*a*) Penge telling Joshua to lay off Vashti, (*b*) Cicely telling Penge to lay off Vashti and take her,

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Cicely, to wife instead, (*c*) Penge telling Cicely that no man not demonstrably insane would ever dream of marrying *her*, and (*d*) Joshua telling Penge that if he didn't keep away from Vashti in the future, he, Joshua, would have much pleasure in slitting his, Penge's, throat for him. Various other issues were raised, apparently, of a supplementary kind, but these were the chief items; and when the quarrelers at last separated and went home, they were all, not unnaturally, in a far from forgiving frame of mind.

"Note, please, that this quarrel was quite certainly genuine. I mention the point because Bolsover and I wasted a good deal of energy investigating the possibility that Penge and Cicely were somehow in cahoots together — that the quarrel so far as they were concerned was a fake. However, the witnesses we questioned weren't having any of that; they told us roundly that if Cicely was acting, they were Hottentots, and we were forced to believe them, the more so as one of them was the local doctor, who had to be called in to deal with Cicely's subsequent fit of hysterics. No chance of collusion in that department, then. Mind you, I'm not saying that if Penge had visited Cicely afterwards, and abased himself and asked her to marry him, she mightn't have forgiven him; she's not, poor soul, of an age at which you can afford to take too much umbrage at the past behavior of a repentant suitor. But the established fact is that between the quarrel and the murder next day he definitely didn't visit her or communicate with her in any way. With the exception of a single interlude of one hour (and of the half hour during which he must have been committing the crime), his movements are completely accounted for from the moment of the quarrel up to midnight on the Sunday; and *during* that one hour, when he *might* (for all we know) have gone to make his apologies to the woman, she was occupied with entertaining two visitors who can swear that he never came near her."

"I take it," Fen interposed, "that this hypothesis of Cicely and Penge working together would have solved your alibi problem for you."

"It would have, certainly, if there'd been evidence for it. But in actual fact, the evidence completely excludes it — and you must just accept that, I'm afraid . . . But now let me get on with the story. The next event of any consequence was on Sunday morning, when Cicely broke her ankle by falling out of a tree."

"A *tree*?"

"An apple tree. She'd been picking the fruit, it seems. Anyway, the effect of this accident was of course to immobilize her and hence, in the event, to free her from any possible suspicion of having herself murdered her brother Joshua, since his body was found some considerable distance from their cottage."

"You think the killing was done at the place where the body was found, do you?"

"We're certain of it. The bullet

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went clean through the wretched man's head and buried itself in a tree trunk behind him — and that's a set-up which you can't fake convincingly, however hard you try: it's no use just firing a second bullet into the tree, because it's got to have traces of human blood and brains on it . . . Cicely, then, is in the clear, unless you feel inclined to postulate her hobbling a couple of miles on crutches with a view to doing her brother in.

"The crime was discovered at about 10 o'clock that evening by several people in a party, one of whom fell over Joshua's corpse in the dark: none of these people features in any other way in the affair, so I needn't specify them at all. The *place* was a little-frequented footpath on the direct route between Joshua's cottage and the centre of Cassibury, approximately two miles from the former and one mile from the latter. And I may as well say at once, to avoid describing the scene in detail, that all the obvious lines of investigation — footprints, position of the body, threads of clothing on brambles, and so forth — led absolutely nowhere. However, there was just one substantial clue: I mean the revolver — a great cannon of a thing, an old .45 — which Bolsover found shoved into the hedge a little distance away, with a set of prints on it.

"Now, we haven't, I'm afraid, so far discovered anything about this gun — its ownership and history and all the rest of it. It may belong to the Prime Minister or the Archbishop of Canterbury, for all we know. But in view of the fingerprints we could afford to defer the problem of the gun's origin for a few days anyway; our immediate plan of action was of course to uncover possible motives for Joshua's death, get by guile the fingerprints of anyone suspicious, and compare them with the prints on the gun — and that led us straight away to Penge, because it was impossible to be in Cassibury five minutes without hearing about the Penge-Vashti-Joshua triangle in all its sumptuous detail. Penge, then, had the motive of jealousy — Vashti isn't the sort of girl I personally would do murder for, but then, I've known a *crime passionnel* be committed for possession of penniless old lady of 68, and statistics show sex to be the motive for quite half the murders committed in this country, so that in that particular department I try not to be surprised at anything — Penge had this motive, then. And a comparison of his fingerprints with those on the revolver showed the two sets to be the same.

"When eventually he was asked to explain this circumstance he told, as I've mentioned, a demonstrable lie: saying that he'd handled the gun three days previously when Joshua (of all people!) had brought it into his ironmonger's shop to ask if a crack in the butt could be repaired. On its being pointed out to him that Joshua had quite certainly been in Dorchester during the whole of the day mentioned, and so couldn't have

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visited the Cassibury ironmonger's, he wavered and started contradicting himself and eventually shut up altogether; in which oyster-like condition he's been ever since — and very wise of him, too.

"However, I'm anticipating: we didn't ask him about the gun until after we'd gone into the problem of the time of Joshua's death. There was delay in getting a doctor to look at the body, so that the medical verdict was too vague to be helpful — between 6 and 10 was the best reckoning we could get. But then two women came forward to tell us they'd seen Joshua alive at 7. They said that on hearing of Cicely's accident they'd visited the cottage to console with her, and had glimpsed Joshua on arrival; though he'd disappeared almost at once (having met the two ladies, I can see why) and they hadn't set eyes on him again. So clearly the next thing to do was to talk to Cicely herself. By early Monday morning — the morning after the murder — Bolsover had taken over, and the local Sergeant, an intelligent lad, had the sense to warn him before he set off for Cicely's cottage that she was a hysterical type who'd have to be handled carefully if her evidence was to be of any use — a diagnosis which the event confirmed. However, it turned out that by a great stroke of luck she hadn't heard of the murder yet; the reasons for this being (*a*) the fact that Joshua had planned to be away from home that night in any case, so that his absence had not alarmed her, and (*b*) the fact that the local Sergeant, a temperamentally secretive person, had sworn everyone who knew of the murder to silence until a higher authority should release them from the vow. Consequently, Bolsover was able to put his most important questions to Cicely *before* telling her his reason for asking them — and a good thing too, because she had a fit of the horrors as soon as she heard her brother was dead, and the doctor refused to allow her to talk to anyone since. Anyway, her testimony was that Joshua, having seen her settled for the night, had left the cottage at about 8:15 on the Sunday evening (a quarter of an hour or so after her own visitors had gone), with a view to walking into Cassibury and catching a bus to Dorchester, where he was to stay with friends. And that, of course, meant that he could hardly have reached the spot where he was killed much earlier than a quarter to 9.

"So the next thing, naturally enough, was to find out where Penge had been all evening. And what it amounted to was that there were two periods of his time not vouched for by independent witnesses — the period from 7 to 8 (which didn't concern us) and the period from 8:30 to 9. Well, the latter, of course, fitted beautifully; and when we heard that he'd actually been *seen*, at about a quarter to 9, close to the place where the murder was committed, we started getting the warrant.

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"And that, my dear Gervase, was the point at which the entire case fell to pieces.

"Penge had lied about his whereabouts between 8:30 and 9: we knew that. What we didn't know was that from twenty past 8 to ten past 9, two couples were making love no more than a few feet away from the place of the murder; and that not one of those four people, during the time they were there, heard a shot.

"It's no use talking about silencers, either; even a silenced report would have been heard, on a quiet night. And so that, as they say, was that. Penge certainly shot Joshua. But he didn't do it between 8:30 and 9. And unless Cicely was lying in order to help him — which is inconceivable; and in any case, Bolsover's ready to swear on the Book that her brother's death was an unspeakable shock to her — unless that, then he didn't do it between 7 and 8, either."

Humbleby stubbed out his cheroot and leaned forward earnestly. "But he worked it out somehow, Gervase. His lies alone would make me certain that he's guilty. And the thought that he's invented some ingenious trick or other, which I can't for the life of me see, makes me writhe."

There was a long silence when he had finished speaking. Presently Fen cleared his throat and said diffidently:

"There are lots of things one wants to ask, of course. But on the evidence you've given me so far the trick looks fairly simple.

"If Penge's alibi is watertight," Fen went on, "then it's watertight. But just the same, it's easy to see how he killed Joshua."

"Indeed." Humbleby spoke with considerable restraint.

"Yes. It's all in the way you look at it. You've been looking at it upside down, you see. The situation, as I understand it, *must* be that it isn't Penge who has the alibi. It's the corpse."

"The *corpse*?" Humbleby echoed.

"Why not? If Cicely was lying about the time Joshua left the cottage — if, in fact, he left much earlier — then Penge could have killed him between seven and eight."

"But I've already explained —"

"That it's inconceivable she'd lie on Penge's behalf. I quite agree. But mightn't she lie on her brother's? Suppose that Joshua, with a revolver in his pocket, is setting out to commit a crime. And suppose he tells Cicely, if any questions are asked, to swear he left her much earlier than he did. And suppose that a policeman questions Cicely on this point *before* she learns that it's her brother, and not the man he set out to kill, who is dead. Wouldn't that account for it?"

"You mean —"

"I mean that Joshua intended to murder Penge, his rival for the young woman's affections; that he arranged for his sister (whom Penge had just humiliated publicly) to give him, if necessary, a simple alibi.

"Well, one can't be sure, of course. But it looks as if Joshua's plan misfired — as if Penge struggled with

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Joshua, got hold of the gun, and killed his assailant in self-defense. Behold Penge, then, with a watertight alibi created — charming irony — by his enemy! If the lovers hadn't been hanging about, he would have spoiled that alibi by going back afterwards — and one wonders why he *did* go —"

"Morbid attraction," Humbleby interposed. "I've seen it happen time and again . . . But good God, Gervase, what a fool I've been! It *is* the only explanation! The one trouble about it is that there's no *proof*."

"I should think there will be," said Fen, "as soon as Cicely ceases to be incommunicado and learns what's happened. If what you say about her dislike of Penge is true, she won't persist in the lie which exonerates him from killing her brother." All at once Fen was pensive. "Though come to think of it, if I were *Penge* —"

Shatteringly, the telephone rang, and Humbleby snatched it from its cradle. "Yes," he said. "Yes, put him on . . . Bolsover?" A long pause. "Oh, you've seen that, have you? So have I — though only just . . . Allowed to talk to people again, yes, so you — *WHAT?*" And with this squeak of mingled rage and astonishment Humbleby fell abruptly silent, listening while the telephone crackled despairingly at his ear. When at last he rang off, his face was gloomy.

"Bolsover thought of it too," he said somberly. "But not soon enough. By the time he got to Cicely's bedside, Penge had been there for hours . . . They're going to get married: Cicely and Penge, I mean. She's forgiven him about the quarrel — I told you she doted on him, didn't I? Bolsover says he's never seen a more obsequious, considerate, dutiful, loving bridegroom-to-be. And, of course, she's sticking to her story about the time Joshua left the house. Very definite about it, Bolsover says."

Fen got to his feet. "Well, well," he said, "you'll never put him in the dock now. And yet I suppose that if he had the courage to tell the truth he'd probably get away with it."

"All I can say is" — Humbleby, too, had risen — "that I hope it really was self-defense. In the interests of justice —"

"Justice?" Fen reached for his hat. "I shouldn't worry too much about that, if I were you. Here's a wife who knows her husband killed her brother. And here's a husband who knows his wife can by saying a word deprive him of his liberty and just possibly — if things didn't go well — of his life. And each knows that the other knows. And the wife is in love with the husband, but one day she won't be any longer, and then he'll begin to be afraid. And the wife thinks her husband is in love with her, but one day she'll find out he isn't, and then she'll begin to hate him and to wonder what she can do to harm him, and he will know this, and she will know that he knows it and will be afraid of what he may do . . .

"Justice? My dear Humbleby, come and have some dinner. Justice has already been done."

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"The Man Who Bought Things Cheap" was first published in "Harper's Magazine" nearly 40 years ago; but if the story had come to our desk in manuscript form only yesterday, we would have sworn it was a brand-new story, written within the past year. There are a freshness in the plot and a modernity in the style that completely belie the true age of this story. And there is something else . . .

The author was a Canadian poet and novelist. Her poetry was said to have distinct pagan and Greek qualities. We think you will find similar qualities in her short story. Her poetry was also marked by rhythmic power, by a deep kinship with nature, and by a delicately artistic sensibility. We think you will find all these qualities strongly knit into "The Man Who Bought Things Cheap." In a phrase, you are about to read an unusual and moving and exotic tale . . .

You might also be interested in the curious circumstances which surrounded our purchase of the right to reprint this strange story. The literary agent's office which originally sold the story to "Harper's" still had the authority to dispose of the reprint rights. But since the author is dead and the literary agent has no idea if she left any heirs, and if she did, where they might be reached, the agent decided to turn over the reprint fee to the Northern Westchester Hospital. We are sure that if there are any heirs they will agree that the literary agent's decision will serve a three-fold purpose: it will keep the story from dying on the vine of oblivion; it will bring pleasure to perhaps a million readers; and it will help a worthy charitable cause. It is strange, is it not, how much good a single detective short story can do . . .

THE MAN WHO BOUGHT THINGS CHEAP

by MARJORIE L. C. PICKTHALL

RANSOME SAID THAT YOU MIGHT pick up specimens of all the unprettiest afflictions of body and soul in Herares ten years ago. He also said that when he saw any particularly miserable bit of human wreckage, white or brown, adrift on the languid tides of life about the jetty, he always said without further inquiry, "It's Henkel's house you're

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looking for. Turn to the left, and keep on turning to the left. And if God knew what went on under these trees, He'd have mercy on you."

The house was the last house on the last road of the town. You don't find it now, for no one would live in it after Henkel; and in a season or two the forest had swamped it as the sea swamps a child's boat on the beach. It was a white house in a garden, and after rain the scent of vanilla and stephanotis rose round it like a fog. The fever rose round it like a fog, too, and that's why Henkel got it so cheap. No fever touched him. He lived there alone with a lot of servants — Indians. And they were all wrecks, Ransome said, broken down from accident or disease — wrecks that no one else would employ. He got them very cheap. When they died he got more.

Henkel was a a large, soft, yellowish man. Ransome said, "I don't mind a man being large and yellowish, or even soft in reason; but when he shines, too, I draw the line." Henkel had thick hands with bent fingers, and large brown eyes. He was a Hollander, and in that place he stood apart. For he didn't drink, or gamble, or fight, or even buy rubber. He was just a large, peaceful person who bought things cheap.

He was very clever. He always knew the precise moment, the outmost low-water mark, of a bargain. His house was full of things he'd bought cheap from wrecked companies or dying men, from the mahogany logs in the patio to the coils of telegraph wire in the loft. His clothes never fitted him, for they belonged to men whom the fever had met on the way up the Mazzaron, and who had therefore no further use for clothes. The only things for which Henkel ever paid a fair price were butterflies.

"I went to his house once," said Ransome — "had to. A lame Indian in a suit of gaudy red-and-white stripes opened the door. I knew that striped canvas. It was the awnings of the old *Lily Grant*, and I saw along the seams the smoke-marks of the fire that had burned her innards out. . . . Then the Indian opened the jalousies with a hand like a bundle of brown twigs, and the light shone through green leaves on the walls of the room. From ceiling to floor they flashed as if they were jeweled, only there are no jewels with just that soft bloom of colour. They were the cases full of Henkel's butterflies.

"The Indian limped out and Henkel came in. He was limping, too. I looked at his feet and I saw that they were in a pair of someone else's tan shoes. That and a whiff from the servants' quarters made me feel a bit sick. I wanted to say what I had to say and get out as quick as I could. But Henkel would show me his butterflies. Most of us in that place were a little mad on some point. I was, myself. Henkel was mad on the subject of his butterflies. He told me the troubles he'd had

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getting them from the Indians, and how his men cheated him. He took it very much to heart, and snuffled as he spoke. 'And there's one I haven't got,' he said, 'one I've heard of but can't find, and my lazy hounds of *hombres* can't find it either, it seems. It's one of the clear-wings — transparent. Here's a transparent silver one. But this new one is gold, transparent gold, and the spots are opaque gold.' His mouth fairly watered. 'I tell you, I will spend anything, pay anything, to get that gold butterfly. And if the natives can't or won't find it for me, my friend, I'll send for someone who can and will.'

"I quite believed him, though I was no friend of his. I didn't know much about butterflies, but I guess that in Paris or London his collection would be beyond price. But I wasn't prepared, two months later, for Scott and his friend.

"Derek Scott. Ever meet him? A very ordinary kind of young Northerner. He was remarkable only in having everything a little in excess of his type — a little squarer in jaw and shoulder, a little longer in nose and leg, a little keener of eye and slower of tongue. I'd never have looked at him twice, as he landed from the dirty steamer with a lot of tin boxes, if it hadn't been that he was hale and sound, with hope in his eyes. Health and hope, at Herares!

"Then little Daurillac ran up the gangway, laughing. I looked at him — everyone did — and wondered. And then, to cap the wonder, the two came up to me with their friendly, confident young faces, and asked for Henkel's house.

" 'Turn to the left,' I said. And then I added, 'You'll excuse me, but what does Henkel want of you?'

"Scott didn't answer at first, but looked me over with his considering eyes, and I remembered a collarless shirt and a four days' beard. But Daurillac said, 'He wants butterflies of us, Monsieur. I am an entomologist, and my friend, he assists me.' He drew up very straight, but his eyes were laughing at himself. Then we exchanged names and shook hands, and I watched them going along the path to Henkel's.

"Next day Scott came down to the jetty. He sat on a stump and stared at everything. He was ready enough to talk, in his guarded way. Yes, he was new to the tropics; in some ways they were not what he had expected, but he was not disappointed. He was here for the novelty, the experience. But his friend, Louis Daurillac, had been in the Indies, and with some of Meyer's men in Burma after orchids. Louis's father was a great naturalist, and Louis was very clever. Yes, Henkel had got hold of him through Meyer. He wanted someone to find this butterfly for him — this golden butterfly at the headwaters of the Mazzaron — someone whose name was yet in the making, someone he could get cheap. . . . So Louis had come. He was very keen on it. Henkel was

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to bear all costs, to supply food, ammunition, trade-goods, etc., and pay them according to the number of the new specimens that they found. 'So you see,' said Scott, with his clean smile, 'Louis and I can't lose by it.'

"We talked a bit more, and then young Scott said to me, suddenly: 'Henkel has everything ready, and we start in the morning. You seem to be the only white man about here. Come and see us off, will you?' I said yes; afterward it struck me as curious that he should not have counted Henkel as a white man. He laughed and apologized for the touch of sentiment. 'It's like plunging head first into a very deep sea,' he explained, 'and one likes to have someone on the shore. You'll be here when we come back?' And I said yes, I'd be either unloading on the jetty or in the new cemetery by the canal. But he didn't smile. His light Northern eyes were gravely considering this land where life was held on a short lease, and he looked at me as if he were sorry for me.

"I saw them off the next day. There were six or eight men of Henkel's, loaded with food and trade-goods, and I saw that two of them were sickening where they stood. I looked in Daurillac's brilliant young face, and I hadn't the courage to say anything but, 'Have you plenty of quinine?' He tapped a big tin case, and I nodded. 'And what are you taking for the Indios?' I asked.

"He fairly bubbled over with laughter. 'You would never guess, Monsieur, but we take clocks, little American clocks. The Indios of the Mazzaron desire nothing but little clocks; they like the tick.'

"Their men had turned down one of the jungle paths. They shook hands with me, and Scott met my eyes with his grave smile. 'Just drawing breath for the plunge,' he said, with a glance at the forest beyond the last white roof. Daurillac slipped his arm through Scott's, and drew him after their slow-going *hombres*. At the bend of the path they turned and waved to me — Scott with a quick lift of the hand. But little Daurillac swept off his hat and stood half-turned for a minute; the sun splashed on his dark head, on his Frenchified belt and puttees, on his white breeches, and on an outrageous pink shirt Henkel seemed to have supplied him with. He looked suddenly brilliant and unsubstantial, a light figure poised on the edge of the dark. . . . One gets curious notions in Herares. The next moment they were gone. The jungle had shut down on them, swallowed them up. They were instantly lost in it as a bubble is lost in the sea.

"Two days before I hadn't known of their existence. But I was there to see them off, and I was there when Scott came back.

"It was well on into the rainy season, and I was down with fever. I was in my house, in my hammock, and the wind was swinging it. It was probably the hammock that did

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all the swinging, but I thought it was the house, and I had one foot on the floor to try and steady it. But it was no use. The walls lifted and sank all in one rush, like the sides of a ship at sea. Outside I could see a pink roof, a white roof, a tin roof, and then the forest, with the opening of a path like the black mouth of a tunnel. I wanted to watch this tunnel, because I had an idea I'd seen something crawl along it a good while before. But I couldn't manage it; I had to shut my eyes. And then I felt the scratching on my boot.

"I caught hold of the sides of the hammock, but it was some time before I could manage to pull myself up. Then I looked down.

"A man was lying on the floor, face down, just as he had crawled into my hut and fallen. The yellowish fingers of one hand clawed on my boot, and that was the only sign that he was alive. He lay quite still, except for the slow working of his fingers; and I sat still, also, staring down at him with the infinite leisure that follows a temperature of one hundred and five. It was only by slow degrees that I realized that this was Derek Scott come back, and that he was probably dying.

"I got to my feet and bent over him, but I wasn't strong enough to raise him, of course. I was afraid he'd die before anyone came. So I took my revolver and aimed as well as I could at that tin roof beneath which my man Pedro was eating his dinner. The barrel went up and down with the walls of the hut, but I must have hit the roof, for the next thing there was a lot of smoke and noise, and Pedro's face, eyes and mouth open, rushing out of it. There seemed no interval before I found myself sitting in the hammock and saying over and over again, 'But where's the little chap? Where's the little French chap?'

"Scott was still on the floor, but his head was on my man's shoulder, and Pedro was gently feeding him with sips of brandy and condensed milk. He turned and looked at me, and his eyes were clear and considering as ever, though his answer didn't sound quite sane. He said, 'The clocks wouldn't tick.'

"He said it as if it explained everything. Then he unstrapped a tin case from his belt, laid his head on it, and was instantly asleep.

"I cried out, 'Is it the fever, Pedro?' But my man said, 'No, Señor, it is the hunger.' He rolled Scott up very cleverly in a blanket. 'This señor has had the fever, but it is not upon him now. Without doubt, he is a little mad from being in the forest so long. But when he wakes he will be stronger.' So much I heard, and no more. Unconsciousness came down on me like a wave. But into the dark heart of that wave I carried the certainty that Pedro knew all about the matter and that he hated Henkel. How or why I was certain of this, I don't know. But I was.

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"I woke in the cool of the evening. The fresh wind off the river was like the breath of life, and Pedro's face, thrust close to mine, no longer grew large and small by fits. I noticed that it was quite gray, and that his lips twitched as he muttered, 'Señor, Señor ——'

"I said, 'Where is the Señor Scott?'

" 'He woke a little while ago, and called for water to wash in, and a clean coat, and he used the hair-brush. Then he took the little tin box and went out — went out.'

"I got to my feet, threw an arm over Pedro's shoulder, and he ran with me out into the moonlit street. The track to the fountain lay like a ribbon of silver, and the houses were like silver blocks. And every house was shuttered and silent — breathless. Not a man lounged under the shade of the walls, not a girl went late to draw water, not a dog barked. The little place was deserted in the hold of the forest. It lay like a lonely, luminous raft in the midst of a black sea. Only ahead of me a man stumbled slowly in the center of the road, and his shadow staggered beside him. I have said there was no other living thing visible. Yet, as this man stumbled past the shuttered houses the very blades of grass, the very leaves on the wall, seemed to have conscious life and to be aware of him. When the wind moved the trees, every branch seemed to be straining to follow him as Pedro and I followed.

"We followed, but we could not gain on him. It was like the dreams of delirium. Pedro and I seemed to be struggling through the silence of Herares as if it were something heavy and resistant, and Scott reeled from side to side, but always kept the same distance ahead. We were still behind when we turned into Henkel's garden, and the scent of the flowers beat in our faces like heat. At the veranda steps we met the servant who had admitted Scott.

"The man was running away. He was a cripple, and he came down the steps doubled up, bundled past us, and was gone. Somewhere a door clashed open. There was no other sound. But in a moment the garden seemed full of stampeding servants, all maimed, or ill, or aged. They melted silently into the bushes as rats melt into brushwood, and they took no notice of us. I heard Pedro catch his breath quickly. But when a light flared up in one of the rooms it showed no more than Scott talking with Henkel.

"They showed like moving pictures in a frame, and the frame was of dark leaves about the window, which was open. I leaned against the side of it, and Pedro squatted at my feet, his head thrust forward as if he were at a cockfight. I did not know just why I was there. Henkel sat at a table, wagging his head backward and forward; Scott was sitting opposite him. And he looked as Lazarus might have looked when first he heard the Voice and stirred.

"Henkel was saying, 'Dear me,

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dear me, but why should this have happened?' And Scott answered as he had answered me, in that strange, patient voice:

" 'The clocks wouldn't tick.'

" 'But they were good clocks,' cried Henkel.

"Scott shook his head. 'No, they were not good clocks,' he explained, gently; 'they were too cheap. They would not go at all in the jungle. An Indian of the Mazzaron does not care what time his clock tells, but he likes it to tick. These were no good. And the food was not good. The things in tins were bad when we opened them.'

" 'Mismanagement, mismanagement,' said Henkel, but Scott went on as if he had not heard:

" 'We followed the river for two days, and then turned east. In a week after that two of your men were dead. They died of fever. No, the quinine was no good; there was a lot of flour in it. Two days more, and another man died, but he would have died anyhow. It was very hard to see them die and be able to do nothing.

" 'The men who were left went so slowly that nearly all our food was gone when we reached the country of the Indios. We made our camp and I shot a pig. That gave us strength, but Louis was very bad then with the fever.

" 'The Indios came down, and we spoke with their head men. They thought we were mad, but the clocks pleased them; and they sat round our tents and shook them to make them tick louder until Louis cried out in his fever that all the world was a great clock that ticked. They gave us leave to hunt in their country for butterflies, and the head men told off six to help us. One was very clever. He used to wear his net on his head, with the stick hanging down behind, and he snared the butterflies with a loop of grass as if they were birds.

" 'Our tents were of cheap cotton stuff that would not keep the rain out, and the wet came in on Louis and made him worse. But he was young, and I saw to it that he had food, and your men loved him. I do not think he would have died if the clocks had ticked properly.'

" 'I do not understand,' said Henkel, blinking his heavy brown eyes.

" 'No? They were so cheap that they broke at the first winding. The Indios brought them back and asked for better ones. I had no better ones.'

" 'Still I do not understand,' said Henkel, smoothly, and blinked in the lamplight.

"Scott's tired voice went on. 'The Indios were very angry. They brought us no more butterflies, and no more food. And presently, as we went about the camp, or the paths of the forest, the little arrows began to fall in front of us and behind us, though we never saw those who shot at us.'

" 'The little arrows?' asked Henkel, heavily. 'I do not understand. Go on.'

" 'There is very little to tell. Only a nightmare of hunger, of wet, of fever, of silence, and the little

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poisoned arrows quivering everywhere. And one day a little dart flickered through a rent in the cotton tenting and struck Louis. He died in five minutes. Then I and the men who were left broke through and came down the Mazzaron. The Indios followed us, and I am the only one left. It is a pity the clocks wouldn't tick, Mister Henkel.'

" 'Ya, ya,' said Henkel, leaning over the table, 'but the butterfly? The golden butterfly? You have found it?'

"Scott opened the tin case slowly and clumsily, drew out the perfect insect, and laid it on the table. But it is wrong to speak of that wide-winged loveliness of glittering and transparent gold as an insect. Henkel sat staring at it, one big yellowish hand curved on either side of it, too happy to speak. His lips moved, and I fancied he was saying to himself, 'Cheap, cheap.'

" 'It is very good,' he said at last, cunningly, 'but I am sorry there is only one. I do not know that it is worth very much. But now I will pay you as I promised. There was no agreement that you should receive the other young man's share, and there is only one insect. But I will pay you.'

"Scott was fumbling in his belt. 'Yes,' he said, 'you will pay me,' and he leaned forward with something in his hand. We saw Henkel's face turn to yellow wax, and he tried to stand up, but he was too stout to lift himself quickly. He had no time to turn before Scott shot him through the heart.

"When I broke through the vines, Scott was moving the butterfly out of the way. He looked up at me with his old, considering look, his old clean smile. 'It was cheap at the price,' he said, touching one golden wing with his finger."

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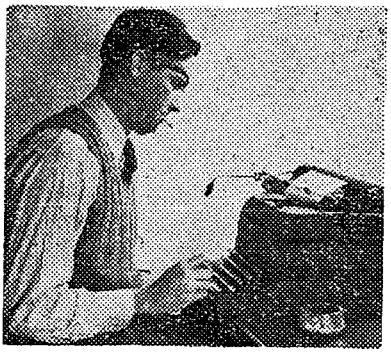

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